

CRACKED SKULLS AND SOCIAL LIABILITY: RELATING HELMET SAFETY
MESSAGES TO MOTORCYCLE RIDERS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Meta Ruthenbeck, who every day of my young life told me, “Susie, you can do anything you want to do, if you just set your mind to it.”

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Most importantly, as in all of my life, I have had the unconditional love and support of my family and friends. My parents have been especially supportive through my graduate school experience. I wish to offer a special word of thanks to them. It has been through experiencing life with these two people, part of “The Greatest Generation”, I have come to value hard work, being open-minded, and offering a kind welcome to people of all cultures.

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ABSTRACT

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Grounded theory analysis, informed by a socio-cultural lens, was applied to the narratives of eighteen motorcycle riders in order to understand, from the rider's perspective, receptivity to warning messages regarding motorcycle helmet use. This study relied upon narrative analysis to identify patterns in communication that surround motorcycle riders' experiences. Socio-cultural cues identified importance in the process of interest development in motorcycle riding, search for information regarding motorcycle riding, response to danger within the motorcycle riding experience, and attitude toward protection messages. Narratives specific to danger, or experiences of motorcycle accidents were analyzed for comparison with fear appeal theory. Special focus was applied to Terror Management Theory (TMT) and applied to the communication surrounding the real experiences of motorcycle accident and the perceived threat of danger while motorcycle riding. Communication evidencing relational influence was examined for examples of socially constructed interpretation of social identity and an individual rider's perspective of their lifeworld. The analysis revealed evidence of the TMT concept of burying or denying thoughts of danger. The TMT concept of lifeworld influence on behavior was evidenced in riders who did not accept warning messages involving helmet use. Examples of attitude and behavior change were present in two study participants' narratives that described experience of severe injury and also the death of a friend. The riders cited these occurrences as experiences that

inhibited their previous behavior of placing thoughts of motorcycle injury and death in the back of mind. Although small in number, this participant group offered multiple categorizations of rider descriptions. The narratives offered distinction in time of life when riding interest developed. As well, motorcycle training facilities were often noted as a source of communication from which riders obtained influence on their future behaviors. From this information insight was gained to offer suggestions for future research on time of message delivery. Riders who develop interest in riding as adults represent a category on which to focus preliminary educational messages. Individuals who have not yet developed an interest in motorcycle riding may benefit from societal cues that demonstrate safe riding behavior. Future research in mass media appeals focused on motorcycle riders are suggested, as is development of educational programs for delivery to high school audiences.

Elizabeth M. Goering, Ph.D., Chair

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Agency Statistics on Highway Safety

Un-helmeted motorcycle crashes are deemed costly for riders and the public. Traffic safety studies show that the motorcycle riding community is a population at risk of severe and costly injury (Naumann and Shults, 2012; Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2012; CDC, 2012, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration [NHTSA], 2005, NHTSA, 2009). Statistics show that helmets provide significant protection from traumatic brain injury upon motorcycle crash (Crompton, et al., 2012; Cavalcante, et al., 2012; Houston, 2010; Ulmer and Northrup, 2005). On the organization's website, the NHTSA provided information for the year 2008, reporting that 5,290 motorcyclists were killed. This number was an increase over 2007 statistics. The NHTSA estimated that helmets saved the lives of 1,829 motorcyclists in 2008, and that 823 more lives could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets (NHTSA, 2008). These statistics suggests that more riders should be converted to being helmet-wearing riders if fatality rates are to decline. Yet, as evidenced by the post mortem count provided by the NHTSA, some riders choose to avoid helmet use (NHTSA, 2008). The repercussions of motorcycle accidents go beyond pain and possible death of the non-helmeted rider. For non-helmeted riders, emergency care is more extensive and the time needed for physical rehabilitation is greater than for helmet riders after a crash (Brandt, et al., 2002). Recuperation time for the accident victim may take him or her away from work for an extended period of time, thereby creating a financial hardship on top of medical bills. The financial consequences of non-helmeted motorcycle

crashes extend to all tax payers. Some studies claim that almost half of motorcyclists admitted to hospitals have no health care insurance or they are covered by a governmental health plan (Derrick and Faucher, 2010; Hundley, et al., 2004; Muelleman, et al., 1992). Other studies show more favorable numbers, but confirm a gap in coverage. For example, a 2006 Department of Transportation publication reflects insurance payer information for motorcycle crashes that occurred between 1998 and 2002 as primarily covered by private insurance, at 63%. Public funding, considered Medicare or Medicaid in this report, accounted for 19.5%, with the remaining 17.5% including workers' compensation, no-fault auto, self-pay, unknown or unreimbursed (Miller, et al., 2006). This financial fact is why the personal freedom of the motorcycle rider overlaps with public health interests. This raises the question, “has a public effort ever been made to persuade motorcycle riders to wear helmets?” From the standpoint of communication, what has taken place thus far?

History of Public Communication Related to Motorcycle Helmets

The importance of motorcycle helmet safety was recognized in the mid-20th century, although more geographically focused among the British population. The relevance of helmet safety became a topic of discussions during the time of the First World War. It has been documented that a British medic, Sir Hugh Cairns, surmised that head injuries of courier soldiers, riding motorcycles, could be reduced with the use of a helmet. The topic was later introduced for discussion among Britain's civilian population (Maartens, et al., 2002).

History of Motorcycle Helmet Laws in the United States

In the United States of America, individual states began to establish mandatory helmet use laws for civilians in the 1960s. Federal influence was cited as the catalyst for many states to enact motorcycle helmet laws in the 1970s. States without universal helmet laws would receive less monetary funding for highways than states with universal helmet laws. Early communication on the topic of motorcycle helmet use took place at the government level. Laws were enacted. As a result, there was much push-back from riders who did not wish to be subjected to helmet laws. The high-level discussions of Federal and State entities created discourse among the individual motorcycle riders. The riders organized. Lobbyists for motorcycle riding organizations worked to repeal the laws in many states (Ulmer and Northrup, 2005). Since the 1970s, some states have reanalyzed and made changes to their helmet laws. Some states changed their laws several times (Croce, et al., 2009; NCSL.org, 2012). Data reflecting motorcycle crash (MCC) incidence and injury, and accompanying medical treatment costs still drives the public debate on the need for a mandatory motorcycle helmet law. For example, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, when the state of Nebraska reinstated its universal helmet law, acute medical hospital charges for injured motorcyclists declined 38 percent. When the state of California introduced a universal motorcycle helmet law in 1992, health care costs associated with head-injured motorcyclists declined. In California in 1993 motorcyclist head injuries had decreased by 48% compared to 1991 rates.

Rationale for Study

Although it is widely accepted that motorcycle helmet use significantly reduces the severity of MCCs (Croce, et al., 2009; IIHS, 2012; CDC, Runge, 1997), convincing riders to wear helmets remains difficult. This may be, in part, due to the fact that within the United States there is little evidence of public health campaigns geared toward motorcycle helmet safety. A challenge exists to communication practitioners to develop a persuasive health campaign focused upon motorcycle rider use of helmets. History shows that an effort to convince lawmakers may have been the wrong place to start this endeavor. If riders could be persuaded to choose a helmet because of a desire to protect themselves, then perhaps laws would not be necessary.

Although academic literature contains much research on persuasive measures to promote traffic safety (Gantz, et al., 1990; Greenfield and Kraskutas, 1993; Taubman Ben Ari, et al., 1999; Taubman Ben Ari, 2000; Taubman Ben Ari, et al., 2000; Panic et al., 2011), motorcycle helmet use has been overlooked. In mainstream media, and in local culture in the United States, it is difficult to find warning messages presented specifically to the motorcycle riding audience. As an example of a traffic safety topic, messages promoting responsible alcohol use cast a broad net that encompasses all vehicle operators. Sometimes motorcycle riders will be included in this audience. These messages become prevalent on highway billboards and television commercials around holiday time. The ill effects of alcohol consumption are featured as encouragement for a driver to stop and think before he or she drinks too much. To craft an effective message geared toward motorcycle helmet use, is it likely that educating the rider on possible traumatic outcomes will be the key to behavior change? It is necessary to ask what

components must be incorporated in messages to change health behaviors and, what must be known about the audience. Communication scholars and social scientists have studied why an individual will not adopt a protective behavior when his or her well-being is at risk, especially after a credible source has explained the threat, and the effectiveness of the threat-avoidance technique. Previous work that has been focused on threat messages may guide the process of creating behavior-changing appeals to motorcycle riders. Therefore, these bodies of literature will be reviewed in the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

If we are to design effective helmet-use messages, it is useful to examine previous work that examined how fear appeals work to persuade an audience on health related topics. The theoretical framework to be reviewed includes the early history of fear appeal research, which reflected a drive paradigm, or fear-as-drive correlation. Work subsequent to the drive paradigm, Protection Motivation Theory, and the more contemporary Terror Management Theory will be reviewed. Because it is expected that fear is an emotion that exists in relation to the context of cultural surroundings, Theory of Reasoned Action, a theory that takes into account social context, will be discussed.

To begin, consider that when threats exist, communication messages usually involve warnings. These threat messages are also called fear appeals. Fear appeals are largely defined by communication scholars and social scientists as a technique for capturing audience attention by framing the health message in the form of a threat (Janis and Feshbach, 1953; Berkowicz and Cottingham, 1960; Leventhal, 1971; Witte, 1992). Messages designed to imply that an undesirable outcome will occur if the viewer does not adopt the suggested behavioral change are part of the threat, or fear appeal. However, the psychological processes that accompany our human communication are complex. Fear is generally regarded as a negatively valenced emotion accompanied by a level of arousal. Fear is elicited by a threat that is perceived to be significant and personally relevant (Easterling and Leventhal, 1989; Lang, 1984; Ortony and Turner, 1990). To a certain extent, it is reasonable to expect that if an effective protective technique exists, most people facing a particular threat will perform the protective measure suggested. The early

research demonstrated that rationale is not always used when a threat appeal message is received. Emotional and cognitive factors create fear, anger, doubt and mistrust within audiences, (Janis and Feshbach, 1953; Leventhal, 1970). Communication scholars and social scientists have examined these processes for decades to determine the appropriate structure for warning messages. In their 1953 study, psychologists Janis and Feshbach performed an experiment on an audience using the topic of dental hygiene. Some of the message content about diseased gums was so distasteful to the audience that some participants in the audience rejected the message content by denying its accuracy. Some audience members completely blocked the message from their thoughts. Overall, the findings indicated the fear inducing messages used caused anxiety that brought about avoidance behaviors in the participants. The participant group demonstrated various ways of diverting audience thoughts away from the warning message and toward the researchers who created the message. Focus on the researchers included criticism of their honesty and personal and professional ethics. Since this early study, communication and social science disciplines have been working to determine what amount of fear is optimal for achieving behavior change in an audience. Although progress has been made, no good formula has been identified for 100% effective behavior-changing persuasion within any population.

Linear Model of Fear Appeal

Leventhal's drive paradigm states that humans cognitively analyze fear appeal messages, first by determining if a threat truly exists. If he or she determines that the threat is real to them, then fear will develop (Leventhal, 1970). The early fear-as-drive model reflected that when fear was aroused in an individual, they would take action.

However, subsequent research found that behavior responding to fear appeal messages was more complex and not definitively predictable.

Influences on Self Protection Behaviors

Fear appeal research evolved to provide more complex models of the cognitive process involved in fear appeals. Rogers introduced the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) to demonstrate that thought processes in reaction to threat messages are more complex than the drive paradigm suggests (Rogers, 1985). In general, it was determined that an initial reaction to a warning message is likely to include an analysis of the threat to determine whether or not the individual is truly susceptible to the danger claimed. The individual will question if the threat is upon a general population, or actually upon him or her. If the individual determines a personal risk is likely, the person will take the next step to analyze the proposed means of threat avoidance. The value of the proposed avoidance mechanism is considered along with the person's ability to perform the avoidance behavior. For example, if an individual is warned that a home intrusion may take place and that he or she should obtain a baseball bat for protection, the individual is likely to make several considerations. The individual may generate the following thoughts: Am I at risk for an intruder to come to my home? Is a baseball bat the best defense tool available for this incidence? Am I strong enough to lift the bat and swing with enough force to stop an assailant? Depending upon the individual's answer to these questions, fear may or may not arise as a result of the fear appeal message. Perhaps the individual lives in a gated community staffed by security guards. In this case, he or she may not feel threatened. Fear likely will not develop because the individual would dismiss the threat. Conversely, if the individual believed that the threat was imminent; fear will

develop and motivate the individual to consider the usefulness of a baseball bat as a defense tool. If the individual possess confidence in the tool and his or her physical strength to wield the bat to a damaging blow, then fear may not arise as a result of the fear appeal message. If the individual had confidence that a bat was an effective tool for protection and that he or she could perform the defense using the bat, then fear would likely not arise as a result of the fear appeal message. This illustration is provided to demonstrate that a cognitive process can have a non-linear structure. Fear subsides when one determines that he or she is capable of managing the threat, because he or she decides to engage in the danger avoidance behavior (Leventhal and Singer, 1966; Leventhal, 1970, 1971; Rogers and Thistlewaite, 1970; Rogers, 1975; Rogers and Deckner, 1975; Rogers and Mewborn, 1976; Rogers, 1985; Rippentoe and Rogers, 1987; Werrij, M., et al., 2010).

Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) integrates elements of PMT, but more closely examines the process of threat message rejection. Using the EPPM, Witte places particular importance on the emotion of fear and the audience's means of controlling fear. Previously used distinctions between cognitive response and emotional response are used as a framework for EPPM. This theory takes into consideration how perception of efficacy has the important ability to tip the audience to engage in danger control or engage in fear control. In the scenarios when fear becomes prominent, for example, when susceptibility is high but efficacy is low, fear becomes heightened. Then, it is the perception of the threat that controls the intensity of the fear response. This suggests that message acceptance or rejection can be determined by the level of perception to both susceptibility and efficacy (Witte, 1992). EPPM seems to endorse

Roger's PMT, yet expands the concept to place the primary focus on the motivating power of fear.

However, understanding of EPPM or the protection motivation models does not provide all the understanding needed to explain how fear appeals are processed. It gives researchers cause to investigate emotions and other influences that may explain acceptance or rejection of warning messages. Thoughts of vulnerability, including death were topics included in subsequent fear appeal theory that was generated after PMT.

Influenced by the work of anthropologist Ernest Becker, social scientists Solomon, Pyszynski and Greenberg examined mortality salience and human behavior towards threat using Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Solomon, et al., 1991). TMT is founded on the premise that the human animal is exclusive to all others in its understanding of death. Humans possess an awareness of their own mortality and are capable of forethought regarding the ramifications of their death. Yet, most people place this thought away into their subconscious so that they may go about living. TMT is used to examine how, when communication brings mortality back to front of mind, mortality salience influences message processing. In this theory, one's cultural world view, created by omnipotent communication, and life experience, influences the acceptance or rejection of a threat message is a facet of TMT (Taubman-Ben-Ari, et al., 1999; Taubman-Ben-Ari, et al., 2000; Taubman-Ben-Ari 2000). TMT researchers suggested that if machismo, or the act of living dangerously, is lauded within a cultural group, then it will be difficult to get people to change their behavior simply by telling them that something is dangerous (Greenberg, et al., 1986; Greenberg, et al., 1990; Greenberg, et al., 1997). An example of this phenomenon occurred during the 1950s when then pop culture icon, actor, James

Dean, represented to the young people of the time, an individual with little respect for rules. His demeanor was of a “tough guy”. Many of the youth of the time were drawn to his performance of a rebel, and they copied his image, emulating his dress, hairstyle and swagger. The unfortunate real life outcome for this actor is that after being stopped for speeding and warned to drive more safely, he did not heed the officer’s warning. He died in a car crash less than one hour after being stopped (Feaster, et al., n.d.). Did James Dean value his rogue persona and free lifestyle more than his life?

TMT takes into account the surrounding cultural context on communication and behaviors. TMT is a complex theory that proposes multiple mechanisms relating to communication, emotion, and interconnected relationships with multiple aspects of one’s world. Although there is no clear formula to define how mortality salience affects health appeal messages, TMT may provide value to exploration of how threat appeal messages are received by motorcycle riders. An important issue to consider is how a rider places importance on his or her peer group. How does societal culture, and relationship, in addition to mortality salience affect the way a motorcycle rider contemplates a warning message to wear a helmet? More information on riders and their world view is necessary in order to understand how safety is perceived. Is safety valued? What is it that causes fear in motorcycle riders? Is danger valued? Can motorcycle riders be characterized into one group, or are there many niches? These questions will help formulate the research questions to be used for this study.

Researchers are still working to determine conditions that influence the receptivity of the audience to warning communication. Still to be discovered is what the right amount of fear might be, and exactly how threat is mentally processed. Whichever

way that fear is involved in an individual's decision making processes, there is more to be considered. Researchers like Fishbein and Ajzen believe that The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) offers one perspective of how people make decisions about their actions and behaviors, in this case, health behaviors. TRA proposes that a person's behavioral intention is a function of that individual's attitude toward the behavior, and that prior to deciding upon one's opinion, that person considers how the behavior would be regarded by peers or other persons important to the individual. This is to say that the person considers his or her reputation or self-value as it relates to the opinions of his or her peer group. The surrounding people and their actions communicate to the individual information on what behaviors the group values. An individual within this group will judge his or her self-esteem based upon this information and will also make behavioral decisions using the same processes (Fishbein, 1990; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

The study of the use of fear in messaging has been examined in many different ways and this literature review does not provide an exhaustive analysis of the topic. The portion of literature that refers to the connection of fear-as- motivation with social world relevance is meant, in this study, to provide structure to examine the notion of one's message processing based upon an understanding of his or her place within the culture.

To summarize, researchers have been able to examine a vast amount of health-related message delivery and acceptance data in order to bring to the academic table many theories to be tested (Janis and Feshbach, 1953; Janis and Mann, 1965; Janice, 1967; Leventhal and Singer, 1966; Leventhal 1971; Rogers, 1985; Rippentoe and Rogers, 1987; Rosenblatt, et al., 1989; Sutton, 1989; Witte, 1991; Taubman, et al., 2000). An effective warning message, as described by Lehto and Miller (1986), must trigger a

multi-linear sequence of events. The warning stimulus is the message and exposure to the message is the first step in the sequence. The last step, ideally, is when the message recipient engages in the threat avoidance response. In a health campaign's use of threat appeals, there is question as to how threat should be conveyed. As demonstrated in the Janis and Feshbach study, communication works within a human realm that is influenced by psychological factors. Further research observed multifactorial processing of fear messages. As communication researchers, we must ask which messages are subverted because of cultural beliefs, personal anxieties, mood or disinterest (Cacioppo and Berntson, 1994; Cacioppo et al., 1999; Cacioppo and Gardner, 1999; Lee and Lang, 2009; Roskos-Ewoldsen, et al., 2004; Van 't Riet, J., et al., 2010). These are the factors that create interference with the message traveling to the consciousness of the recipient so that it might be contemplated.

In order to craft an effective fear appeal message, we must learn the ideal situation in which the intended recipient will be most receptive to a warning communication. It appears that in the case of mass media messages, the term "public" really means collection of many audiences. This is why the characteristics of each audience are important to define. For example, an audience of motorcycle drivers within the United States may be a subset of the larger group of motor vehicle drivers, those who drive cars and trucks. However, the size, power and use of these two-wheel, motorized vehicles provides for many subsets, suggesting that drivers of these vehicles might be a very diverse group. Questionable is whether or not the same message to all subsets of motorcycle riders would be useful.

Federal agencies offer much information about motorcycle riders. Quantitative data gives us a clear message that deadly motorcycle accidents are exponentially more prevalent than fatal automobile accidents. However, the Federal statistics do not get at the real motivation of the riders. Before a persuasive message to a motorcycle rider to encourage helmet use can be constructed, it is important to understand the worldview beliefs of the rider and that person's norms and attitudes that support his or her opinion of helmet use. Fear appeal theory provides a structure to test message content and behavioral reaction. However, to learn the rider's decision-making processes, in-depth probing is necessary.

Importance of Narrative

Communication theorist, Walter Fisher endorsed a theoretical concept that humans are inherent story tellers, and that through this story-telling, reason and rationality are expressed (Fisher, 1984). It was expected that posing open ended questions to study participants would invite the motorcycle rider to tell his or story, one that would reveal rationale for his or her use of safety mechanisms. To this end, it was expected that to learn directly from the rider why he or she chooses to wear the helmet or not wear the helmet would provide valuable information to structure more targeted communication studies. Embracing Fisher's shared theoretical perspective that people will reveal their values and rationale for their behavior through the act of telling their own story, researchers may learn how motorcycle riders frame their world. Fisher was influenced by the ancient theory of "Rational World Paradigm" in which it is believed that humans have the ability to rationalize in order to make decisions, that communication occurs in the form of argument, in deliberative decision making, and that the situation or immediate

context, plays an important part in the deliberation. This paradigm also provides the notion that the degree one seems rational has much to do with the decision maker's subject matter knowledge and argumentation skill. Rational World Paradigm assumes that the world does fit together in a rational way, like a puzzle, and that individuals must deliberate and decide how best to place the puzzle pieces (Fisher, 1984; Dahlstrom, 2010).

Groups make poor decisions. Examples are documented on the evening news, almost daily. Narratives represent a powerful and ubiquitous form of communication that influence what individuals believe about the world (Dahlstrom, 2010). In this study, the power of narrative was regarded as an effective means to gaining general understanding of motorcycle riders and their safety motivations. Specifically in question is the behavior riders employ in order to make a decision about helmet use. Can patterns of influence be recognized so that intervention, or pattern change, might be suggested to achieve a higher incidence of helmet use? What messages might the rider be consuming, and from what source, is the rider using to analyze his or her behavior toward helmet use? What cultural, societal or relational factors might affect the riders' decision? This study is meant to be broad and exploratory; the following research questions are designed to illuminate future patterns of behavior to study.

Research Questions

Two research questions pertain to this study.

Research Question 1: From the rider's perspective, what are the cultural or social cues and common ideas that affect a rider's decision to wear a helmet?

Research Question 2: Under what conditions will a motorcycle rider be most likely to recognize a personal vulnerability to a threat contained in a fear appeal message and devote deliberate effort to evaluating the avoidance behavior suggested in the message?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Experiment

According to numerous studies that examined warning messages and the role that fear plays in influencing behaviors after message delivery, one's perception of personal vulnerability to the threat plays an important role in the recipient's subsequent actions (Easterling and Leventhal, 1989; Lang, 1984; Ortony and Turner, 1990). To learn how motorcycle riders might react to warning messages regarding helmet safety, it was necessary to learn about their thought processes relating to assessment of personal risk connected to behaviors incorporated in motorcycle riding. This study was informed by two theories that take into account the social and cultural aspect of message processing, Terror Management Theory (TMT) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

TMT proposes that we as humans, understand our own mortality, and then in various ways, mitigate the fears created by threats to our well-being. But, TMT also conceptualizes that in this cognitive process we are influenced by the actions and opinions of those persons or groups with whom either we have a positive affiliation, or a negative affiliation (Greenberg, et al., 1990, 1997). Social Identity Theory supports concepts inherent in TMT and should be considered when analyzing the narrative data. Social scientist, Hogg, provides this description of the theory, "Social Identity Theory is a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, in group processes, and intergroup relations. It embraces a number of interrelated concepts and subtheories that focus on social-cognitive, motivational, social-interactive, and macrosocial facets of group life. The approach is explicitly framed by a conviction that

collective phenomena cannot be adequately explained in terms of isolated individual processes or interpersonal interaction alone and that social psychology should place large scale social phenomena near the top of its scientific agenda” (Hogg, 2006, p.111). Social Identity Theory essentially places importance on the psychological processes that take place when one is evaluating his or membership in a group. There is evaluation of quality and trait similarities. This means that we consider like and unlike qualities between ourselves and individuals inside and outside of a group. When we deem that we are indeed a member of a group, we tend to favor our own qualities above those persons outside of our group. We determine our self-esteem or value in our communities by comparing ourselves to others in that group. If we deem a person or group to be favorable, we want to know how much we are like that other person or group. Conversely, if we deem another person or group to be unfavorable, we examine how much we are like or unlike that other person or group. If we recognize that we are different, or recognize that we want to be different from others, we may change our behavior accordingly. This cognitive process of comparison is performed by an individual to know where he or she stands in the world. By reducing the uncertainty of where he or she fits in, self-esteem is bolstered. Similarly, the TRA is one that suggests peer opinions are important to us and that we attempt to consider how our peers might react to our behaviors prior to taking action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, TRA also asks us to consider how social and cultural influences may affect human decision making.

My approach to the data analysis in this study was to look for evidence that might support or refute the concepts of both TMT and TRA. Since fear appeal research has

historically not provided data focused on the activities specific to motorcycle riders, it was necessary to obtain a baseline opinion from current riders. To organize how this might be achieved I considered the work of Fisher, which places value on personal narratives. Utilizing Fisher's perspective that through narrative an individual will reveal his or her rationale for choices and personal actions (Fisher, 1984), I designed interview questions to elicit the study participants' cooperation in talking about the history of his or her motorcycle riding experience. The questions dealt with the person's motivation to become a motorcycle rider; his or her affiliation with others as it related to riding; his or her engagement in behaviors for injury prevention; and messages relating to these categories. In addition to the questions on motivations and safety behavior, I added one question on media depictions of motorcycle riders in an effort to obtain information on a possible media influence on riding behaviors. The interview questions are provided in Appendix A.

Interview Structure

The interviews were semi-structured. According to Baxter and Babbie, "a semi-structured protocol generally consists of a list of questions the interviewer wants answered by the informant. With the exception of an occasional close-ended question, these questions are open-ended in nature." (Baxter and Babbie, 2004, p.329). During the interview process, I informed each participant that I would ask five questions, but that his or her response to each question was expected to be a free-flowing account of personal experiences. Participants were instructed to feel free to talk about any topic they felt would be relevant to the conversation. As an example, I began each interview by saying

to the rider, “tell me how you first became interested in motorcycle riding. What influenced you to pursue this activity?”

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Study participants were recruited through social media, personal contacts, and a free announcement posting in the university’s online classified advertisements. Each participant was chosen because he or she self-identified as a current motorcycle rider. The riders freely gave their time with no monetary compensation. The interviews were conducted over a one year period of time. Interviews were conducted in person, via computer using voice over internet protocol (Skype) and also by telephone. There was no time restriction placed on the interviews. Interviews ranged in length from seventeen to approximately ninety minutes.

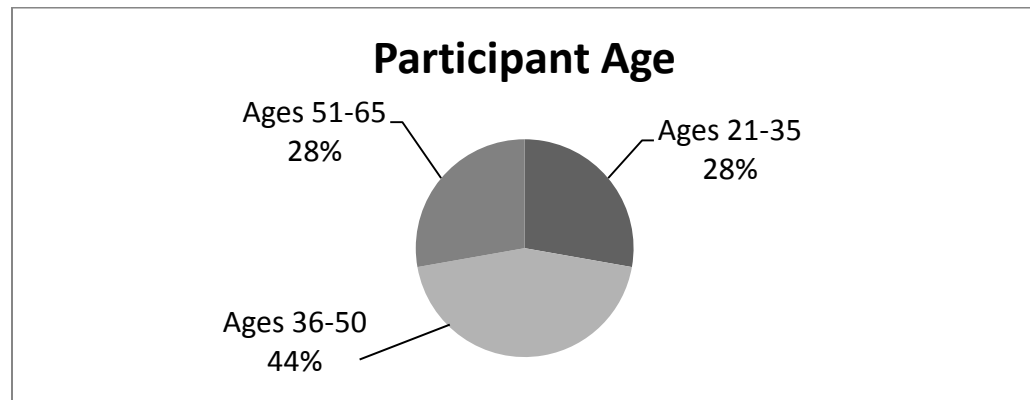
At the time of interview, informed consent was obtained from each participant. Each individual agreed for the interview to be audiotaped and acknowledged an understanding that his or her personal identity would be concealed and pseudonyms would be used to mask any identifying information in the text of the transcriptions and final paper. Each interview audio recording was transcribed. The text from each interview was combined in a large, all-inclusive document.

Sample Profile

The participant group contained eighteen subjects (N=18). Fifteen participants were male (82%), three were female (18%). The participants ranged in age from 28 to 62 years of age. 28% of the participants represented the 21-35 years age range, 44% of the participants represented the 36-50 year age range, and 28% of the participants represented the 51-65 year age range. The interview questions did not originally include

question on age. Participants early in the interview process offered this information. It was a logical piece of information to help me understand the timeline of their personal histories. When it became apparent that this information was relevant to the stories, I began to ask later study participants their ages, if they did not offer this information. The early interview group represented a primarily middle-aged set. To obtain a more accurate sense of all riding activity, I made a concerted effort to recruit younger individuals. I increased the number of study participants in an effort to obtain histories of younger riders. To do this I tapped into my social network to ask my community for introductions to motorcycle riders under the age of thirty-six. I was able to add additional data to the study. Chart 1 visualizes the age ranges that make up the study participant group.

Chart 1



Data Analysis

The narrative in the document was analyzed using grounded theory analysis. According to Glaser and Strauss (1973), grounded theory is, in essence, a way to discover or formulate theory from data. It is a systematic way to analyze data so that themes may emerge and comparisons may be made to facilitate the making of assumptions or predictions that may explain behaviors (page 3). Grounded Theory analysis is different

from other methods of sociological research in that it uses the data to create theories, rather than find data to confirm or refute proposed theories. Grounded theory must be organized, systematic and detailed (Glaser and Strauss, 1974, p.3). In this study, the process did not look to generate new theory, as much as to search for themes that might align with TMT and TRA. In this work, Grounded Theory was more of a theme organizing mechanism. Grounded theory values the general method of comparative analysis that has been customary in sociological research. In this study, data were gathered to enable comparison of opinions and behavioral motivations of motorcycle riders in three different age ranges. The data were analyzed with the intent to identify common themes offered by the rider's collective narratives. Using Grounded Theory as Glaser and Strauss suggested, the evidence offered through the motorcycle rider's narrative, offers assumptions to be studied more deeply. "The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only with accuracy), but the concept undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied" (Glaser and Strauss, 1973, p. 23).

Grounded theory analysis calls for a systematic and deliberate approach to analyzing data. The process began in this study by collecting narratives from riders in three different age categories. The manner in which the interviews were conducted also contained uniformity. The subjects were asked the same questions, in the same order as the interview guide outlines. As previously described, their narratives were transcribed in individual documents. The individual documents were then combined into one large document. The large document was examined repeatedly to search for common themes. When the themes were identified, the document was replicated, one copy for each theme.

The text relevant to the theme was highlighted throughout the document and the document was saved according to the theme. The themes were used to compare and contrast theoretical approaches to fear appeal trials for a motorcycle riding audience.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section reports what I have learned about the motorcycle riders from these interviews.

Self-reported Behaviors

According to the self-reported information provided by the entire participant group, fifty percent (50%) of the motorcycle riders reported that they always wear a helmet. Thirty-three percent of the group (33%) reported that they almost always wear a helmet. Eleven percent (11%) reported that they rarely wear a helmet. Six percent (6%) said that they will not wear a helmet unless they are riding in a state where it is required by law. At the time of the interviews, none of the study participants lived in states where the law required a motorcycle helmet. From the perspective of the law, the use of a helmet to this group was optional. Table 1 illustrates the degree of helmet use as disclosed by the entire group of study participants.

Table 1

Self-reported Helmet Use	
Always	50%
Almost Always	33%
Rarely	11%
Only if law requires	6%

Much of the demographic information regarding this participant group was voluntarily disclosed during the interview process. That is to say that there were no specific questions that were asked of the participants to disclose a particular piece of information, for example, military experience. To further describe the participants, all of the riders were employed full-time. Two reported being part-time students as well. Five

riders, representing twenty-eight percent (28%) of the participant group, reported being former military members. Five members, representing twenty-eight percent (28%) of the participant group, noted that they had experienced riding a two-wheeled motorized vehicle in childhood, citing mini-bikes or small scooters as the vehicle used.

Danger

The topic of physical danger was expressed by several participants in this study through detailed accounts of motorcycle accidents. Forty-seven percent of the group (47%) admitted to experiencing at least one motorcycle accident. Some study participants revealed they had experienced multiple accidents in which they were directly involved. Repercussions of the accidents ranged from minor damage to the motorcycle, to the motorcycle being completely destroyed. These riders expressed accounts of personal physical injury that ranged from minor or superficial injury, to incidences requiring hospitalization and rehabilitation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) had been close to a motorcycle accident, close enough to witness the crash and understand the resulting condition of the motorcycle rider after the accident. Thirty-three percent of the participants (33%) revealed that they knew a motorcycle rider who had sustained a severe injury or was killed as a result of a motorcycle crash. Of the riders involved in an accident, only one admitted that the accident caused him to give up motorcycle riding. This same person gave up motorcycle riding for a few years and then later returned to riding. A number of participants expressed their attitude and emotions as related to their personal experience of pain and injury caused by motorcycle accidents, or their witness of significant damage to another rider. In this study there were also riders who did not express that they had experienced the same events. A change in receptivity to warning

messages relating to motorcycle helmet use was disclosed by a small number of participants, which will be discussed in detail later in this text.

Cognitive Processing of Warning Messages

Studies of warning messages have uncovered a good deal of information on how humans react to fear messages, the basic outcome is that the message processing sequences are complex and subject to many conditions. For example, Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) explains that fear appeal messages bring about in the audience member an assessment of personal vulnerability to the threat highlighted in the warning message. PMT further describes an individual's cognitive process of the fear appeal message to include consideration of the threat avoidance behavior suggested. If the audience member deems a threat worthy of attention, then the suggested protective behavior is assessed for its value. Finally, the individual must consider whether or not he or she is capable of performing the protective behavior (Rogers, 1975). Cognitive processing also involves consideration of one's worldview and knowledge of peer opinions (Greenberg et al., 1986; Greenberg et al., 1990; Greenberg et al., 1997). Normative behaviors of one's culture are known and this knowledge serves to influence the individual's decision on his or her behavior change. For example, if an individual knows that his or her friends think that people who engage in reckless acts are distasteful, then that individual likely will not wish to partake in an activity that would create an unfavorable opinion from his or her peer group. Framing messages in particular ways may also bring about complications that influence the cognitive process of message evaluation. Janis and Feshbach suggested that communication framed as reassurance and that accompanies a fear appeal will help to alleviate audience anxiety created by a threat

message. The reassurances thereby reduce the anxiety level so that consideration of the warning message may proceed (Janis and Feshbach, 1953). Insko and colleagues believed that a perception of punishment becomes a factor to consider when warning messages are too harsh (Insko, et al., 1965). Additional consideration of psychological or cognitive influence was presented by Stephenson and Southwell who posit that individuals possess a drive for sensation seeking, a factor which affects his or her receptivity to warning messages. Individuals differ in sensation seeking tendencies. This difference accounts for varying reactions to warning messages (Stephenson and Southwell, 2006). These few examples illustrate the range of emotions that may come about as a result of a warning message.

Categorization of Group Characteristics

To learn more about how we might effectively target the motorcycle riding population, and understand how motorcycle riders associate cultural norms and their personal worldview, I began by attempting to identify characteristics of the riders in this study so that I may then find commonalities. I sought significance for some of the basic historical information relating to riding experience. More than a quarter of the participants possessed childhood riding experience (28%). I compared this information against the data of self-reported helmet use in order to search for information that may support an idea for further inquiry. A great percentage of those with childhood riding experience reported to always or almost always wear a helmet. I then examined the same data for those riders who began motorcycle riding as adults. The results were consistent for those who had their first riding experience as children and those who had their first

riding experience as adults. This data instructed me to cull the narratives for communication that may relate to the riders' motivations in both scenarios.

Influenced by TMT, I wanted to discover how this study group of motorcycle riders determined their individual value within the community. I looked for indication on how each the rider analyzes his or her ability as a driver, or weigh threats and consequences. Being mindful of Fisher's expectation on narrative, I searched for commonalities in the stories of each rider. Categories formed from the stories to denote themes that were relevant to the project. The themes that came forth signaled importance in the categories of personal life experiences, change in responsibility is one example; witness of or participation in a serious accident; self-awareness of riding technique and ability that brings a sense of control and thereby protection; perceived probability of accident types with expectation favoring the occurrence of a minor accident; types of physical injury that differentiate in minor skin irritations to major threat to life; time in life that instruction occurs; time in life when motorcycle riding interest is at its peak for the individual; and manner in which instruction is delivered, training from an acquaintance versus classroom by a certified specialist, with particular importance to messages delivered by "experts".

Relational Influences

As described earlier, particular attention was given to the cultural surroundings of the riders at all stages of their motorcycle riding interest. When the narratives collectively provided information on family situations and close relationships, I began by looking for detailed information that explained scenarios and the communication that took place. This proved especially enlightening when learning how riders transformed to the role of

adult motorcycle rider. Many childhood experiences were offered. Whether or not the rider became a rider of two-wheeled vehicles as a child or adult, influences were present from childhood that might have affected the rider later in life. For some riders, the cultural surroundings were such that a need for a mode of transportation caused transition to riding a motorcycle. Many of the riders who became riders as adults disclosed that they saw motorcycles in their surroundings and developed an interest from there. Perhaps they noticed a nice looking piece of machinery, or they were introduced by friends. Since these were responses to my first question, which was a simple inquiry on what influenced the person to become a rider, a number of historical accounts were given to frame the experience for me. For this reason, I consider relational influence a phenomenon embedded within cultural context. Societal norms incorporate communication that is reflective of what is considered customary among a group. That this communication and action can be seen by others, even if one is not a participant, is a potential for influence. A sampling of comments that reflect relational scenarios is provided below.

A majority of the participants revealed that relational influences early in life were a contributing factor in their desire to ride a motorcycle as an adult. One participant, Randy, said that his memories of childhood were of his father and other men in the neighborhood riding motorcycles. When asked what influenced Randy to become interested in motorcycle riding, he said,

“My dad and my neighbors rode. They were all interested in motorcycles and working on them. I liked to hang around. I am the type of guy who likes to work on engines. I have since I was a kid.”

Another rider, Leslie, said that she began her interest in motorcycle riding at age

8. Leslie said,

“My brother got a motorcycle for his seventh birthday. I was eight. So, we argued over the bike until my dad decided to get a second one, so we wouldn’t kill each other.”

Leslie said that her parents also purchased motorcycles so that they could ride with the children. The whole family had two-wheeled motorized vehicles that were acceptable for off-road riding as well as on the country roads near where Leslie grew up. Leslie’s family often rode through courses in the woods and they did this activity with other families in the area. Their motorbike riding was a social activity with other families with young children. Larry remembers a similar experience as a child. He said that his best friend in grade school had a mini-bike and Larry was invited to ride at his friend’s home when he was in kindergarten. Talking about his childhood best friend, Larry said,

“His parents actually had him racing motocross in kindergarten. They had a little beginning set up. So he grew up racing. So, he was my best friend in grade school. As a younger child, that’s how I got introduced into it. So, it was probably peers or friends that got me into it.”

Other participants told of interests they held at a young age, whether it was a curiosity to work on engines, a love of riding on anything fast, or a desire to be a part of a group. For these people, motorcycles offered a means to pursue their interests. As a small boy, Conrad spent time with his uncle and older cousins, who were scooter and motorcycle riders. Conrad purchased a box of parts at a garage sale when he was about 11 years old. When he asked his mother if he could keep the purchase so that he could rebuild a motorcycle that he intended to ride, she quickly agreed. Conrad surmised that his mother expected that this endeavor would keep him occupied and out of trouble for an entire summer. Conrad’s older, motorcycle riding, teenage cousins and their father

possessed an aptitude for engine repair. In about three weeks' time and because of the help of his family, Conrad was riding his own motorcycle. He then rode with his teenaged cousins. Today Conrad is a middle-aged man and still rides motorcycles with the cousins that helped build his first motorbike. Some of the study participants expressed that their interest in motorcycle riding began before reaching adulthood and they mentioned that parents or other adults in the community introduced them to the idea of motorcycle riding. DQ noticed motorcycles when he was a small boy. It was an interest that stayed with him until adulthood. When asked what influenced him to start riding a motorcycle, DQ said,

“Well, I had a friend when I was younger, a really early teen, back in Chicago. His father, his step father had a Harley and ya know? I was just always fascinated with his motorcycle, and others I noticed. When I was a kid I used to put something in the spoke of my bicycle tire to make it sound loud, like the motorcycle muffler.”

Even though DQ did not become a motorcycle rider until he was an adult, he clearly remembers childhood influences that caused him to pursue the activity later.

Societal and Cultural Influence

The late teen years were a time when two of the participants developed an interest in two-wheeled vehicles that both riders described as scooters, and not motorcycles. I placed these two participants, demographically, in the category of those who started riding a motorcycle as adults. They began riding prior to turning 18 years of age. However, they were of age to obtain a driver's license and act with the same responsibility as an adult in regards to motorized vehicles. Therefore, I surmised that they should be categorized as adults. In the United States, the late teen years are the time when teenagers are allowed the privilege of driving. It is a rite of passage that causes many

teenagers to direct their attention to motorized vehicles during the years leading up to the legal driving age. Both Gary and Terry spoke of their teenage experience riding motor scooters. They described mini-bikes and scooters as smaller, less powerful motorcycles. They rode these vehicles away from city and town roadways, on paths in fields or on rural roads. Gary, who admitted deriving thrill from fast vehicles, participated in motocross events. According to these participants, motocross is a sport typically enjoyed by youth. The two-wheeled vehicles used are lighter-weight than motorbikes. Yet, Gary described that the motocross vehicles were capable of a significant amount of power. According to the website pyramidsmx.com, "Motocross is a fast, physically demanding and visually spectacular racing discipline. It's an intense and exciting sport. Motocross races are held on an enclosed, marked and fenced circuit that combines the terrain's natural features such as hills and cambers with man-made jumps to create spectacular and physically challenging circuits. On a typical MX track you'll find all manner of elements including fast straights, sharp climbs and drops, big jumps, technical corner sections and rough n' bumpy bits." For Gary, and also for Conrad, who was mentioned earlier, riding motocross was a chapter in a long history of motorcycle riding. Neither man emerged from this hobby without experiencing injury. Gary experienced broken bones and Conrad spoke of spinal injury. Conrad said,

"I'm two inches shorter than I used to be because I have compressed discs in every vertebra in my back. I've had back surgeries and foot surgeries and my knees are bad."

With a chuckle, Conrad said,

"I've paid my price for falling off motorcycles."

Gary, Terry and Conrad graduated to larger motorcycles, ones meant for road use, and continued to pursue their interest out on the streets.

Two of the study participants, Ralph and Scott, pursued motorcycle riding during their college years. The infrastructure of campus society had not provided convenient mass transit for either of these participants. Each was motivated by a need for transportation. Ralph spoke of his experience with a lack of enthusiasm. He said that he needed transportation and the motorcycle seemed as good as anything else. Scott wanted transportation around his college town. Even though Scott had access to family vehicles, they were all the four-wheeled kind. Scott said,

“I was 20 and it just seemed like a cool, seemed like a hipster thing to do, to get a scooter and ride it around.”

Scott saw many college students riding scooters. He thought that scooters were convenient. He also enjoyed that his parents thought of scooter riding as a bit “radical.” Now Scott still enjoys the convenience and cost efficiency of a motorcycle. He is older and rides a more substantial motorcycle. However, he enjoys that his girlfriend owns a car that they both may use.

The participant group also included riders that developed an interest in motorcycle riding well into their adult years. Former military members talked about how they notice motorcycle use on the bases where they were stationed. One participant, Jeff, said,

“When I was in the navy in Dallas, Texas, at the naval air station, I started taking an interest in motorcycles... I volunteered to go to the Middle East. While I was over there, there was a Harley Davidson shop over in the United Arab Emirates. When I was over in the Middle East, this one guy on our weekend off, we’d go to the other side of the UAE and drive across the desert.”

When Jeff returned from the service, he looked to a local motorcycle training facility to further research his interest in motorcycle riding. Raina, a 42 year old professional woman, said that motorcycle riding was something she had wanted to pursue for a long time. She had noticed motorcycle use in her daily life. Raina said about motorcycle riding, "I think that it's great for anyone that wants to pursue because it's actually been a long, long term goal and dream of mine. I had a five year plan and it was actually to buy my bike at 40. But, I bought myself a car for graduation when I finished my masters, so..." Even though Raina did not purchase her motorcycle exactly when she thought she would, she followed through on her plan eventually. Raina did not offer any specifics about what drew her interest to motorcycle riding, but she had clearly considered the activity in a very deliberate manner. She took a motorcycle training course so that she could learn about motorcycle riding without having to purchase a motorcycle first. Raina believed that this was a good way for her to find out if she truly was as interested as she thought. The idea of a heavy motorcycle intimidated her. Raina graduated from the course without incident. She waited six months before shopping for a motorcycle. She still felt intimidation of the motorcycle when she went shopping. A dealer let her test drive a motorcycle in their lot. Raina realized that she possessed the skill to operate the vehicle. She purchased a small motorcycle and then graduated to a larger one within a year. Raina had to pursue her new hobby of motorcycle riding at her own pace and now she rides comfortably.

Another rider, Dave, wanted to join a group of his friends who were seasoned motorcycle riders. When Dave was in his late forties, he pursued information and training through a motorcycle training course, as Raina had. Dave took the course because it not

only taught him how to ride, when he passed the course successfully, he was given a license to ride. Other participants in the group spoke of a motorcycle riding course. Participant, Robert, took the course even though he had been a motorcycle rider for about thirty years. When Robert's son, Brandon, expressed an interest in motorcycle riding, Robert was able to convince his son to take a motorcycle instruction course. This was because he framed it as something fun that father and son could do together. Robert was pleased that his son was willing and able to receive instruction from professionals so that Brandon might learn how to ride safely. Other experienced riders cited a benefit to taking the motorcycle training courses, occasionally. They said that some insurance companies offer reduced rates with proof of recent road safety training.

An opinion shared by many of the riders in this study was a respect for the law. Whether or not a state mandated helmet use by law, all of the riders wished to comply with the law, even if those who said they usually did not wear a helmet. These participants expressed a general respect for the law and expressed no strong complaints about mandatory helmet laws. As well, some riders expressed that they practice abstinence from alcohol while riding. This practice was described not only as a "common sense" behavior, but a good way to stay out of trouble with the law.

Safety

The second question in the interview guide dealt with the concept of protection, or safety measures. I asked the participants in various ways, "what do you do to protect yourself while riding, or what do you do to stay safe?" Overwhelmingly, there was a priority given to skin protection. From many of the participants the first response to this question was a comment on protection from burns, and road rash, that is skidding across

pavement or gravel without skin being protected. For example, Rhonda is a participant who has been riding for more than twenty-five years. Rhonda's initial response was, "I don't ride in shorts, period! I definitely protect my feet. I always wear boots, all the time. I don't wear sandals or anything like that. People do wear sandals and have their toes out, and so forth. But, I always wear a boot. I always wear long pants, mostly jeans, period." Rhonda's statement came across with a great deal of conviction.

Similar to Rhonda, I heard the same level of emphasis from Larry. He said,

"I don't like to ride in shorts. That's number one! I've seen too many people, and my ex-wife has a big burn mark. You can usually tell the people who ride in shorts because they've got a big burn mark on their leg. Because, the pipes get red hot and you'll just cook the skin on you. So, I don't like riding in shorts. I always ride in pants."

Even participants who did not begin their response to the safety question by talking about skin protection, still made mention of this practice. Terry said,

"The only thing, safety wise, that I do is wear long pants. I've ridden a motorcycle only one time in my life in a pair of shorts. I see guys riding in shorts with flip flops and no shirt, and they've got a girl on the back who is wearing shorty shorts and you know, I'm like, 'wow!' That's, not for me. If something happens and my legs are covered in some kind of pants, jeans preferably, maybe I can walk away from it without too much road rash on my legs. You know, I could still walk around if my back is all jacked up."

Robert's initial answer was all-inclusive of everything he felt was important for safety gear. Robert said,

"I have always been a person that, if I put the motorcycle down, I don't want to end up like one of these people that are wearing shorts, gym shoes, and no helmet on, and everything. I have always ridden with a helmet, back in Illinois, and even here (Arizona), they are both no helmet states, I never rode without a helmet."

Then there was Leslie, who in her many years of riding had seen a lot. Like many of the riders, Leslie mentioned that she believed it very unwise a choice for women to ride on the back of a motorcycle while wearing only shorts and sandals. Leslie told the story of her sister-in-law who was riding on the back of her brother's motorcycle, and her sister-in-law had been wearing shorts. Unfortunately, the couple was involved in a fairly minor accident. Leslie said,

“I also see these girls riding in sandals and shorts. My sister-in-law spent several hours in the emergency room getting gravel picked out of her very long, pretty legs because she had sandals and shorts on.”

The topic of helmet use was not at the forefront of the safety discussion for most of the study participants. Although, most of the participants listed a helmet as something they included in their listing of gear. Of the participants who mentioned a safety training course, especially those who developed the interest in riding later in life, the helmet use held more priority than with some of the other riders. Raina, who had taken a motorcycle course, mentioned the helmet first when she spoke of her safety practices. Her initial response to the question about safety gear was,

“Oh, I definitely wear a helmet and all times, even if I am just in my neighborhood. When I took it out just to practice, I wore my helmet at all times. I have an open helmet where the face mask lifts up or down. I don't wear gloves but I always wear a closed shoe, whether it's a boot or tennis shoe”.

She stated this with a great deal of conviction in her voice. Raina admitted that warm weather makes helmets rather uncomfortable, but that is not a factor that changes her use. Raina said,

“I'm just not (willing to take that chance of riding without a helmet). I mean, and I am a heavy, heavy, sweater, but it's like it doesn't matter. When I get to the stoplight, if I need to take the helmet off and beautify myself, I'll do that. But, I'm gonna ride with a helmet.”

Some of the riders offered rationale for helmet use, and some offered arguments in opposition to wearing a helmet. Earlier Larry was mentioned. He disclosed that the feeling of a helmet was so uncomfortable to him that it caused him to divert his focus on the road because of the uncomfortable feeling on his head. Since all riders, at least in this participant group, placed primary importance on paying attention to the road while driving, anything to distract was unwelcome. Justin was another rider who simply did not like the way it felt to wear a helmet. Justin felt no need to engage in an argument about helmet use. Justin told me that he doesn't like helmets and he won't wear one unless he is in a state where helmets are required by law. Justin carries a helmet while riding. When he arrives at the state line where helmets are required, he will don the helmet. When he crosses out of that state, he will doff the helmet. If he does not have to wear the helmet, Justin will not do so.

Another rider, Terry, who was also mentioned earlier, brought an additional perspective to helmets as protection. Terry rode a motorcycle while deployed on military duty. It was not part of his service position. Motorcycle riding for Terry was a recreation activity when he returned to base. Terry spoke of the many requirements the United States government places on motorcycle riders while on base. Terry elaborated that a motorcycle rider could expect ramifications from the military if that person was off base, incurred an accident, and was found to be non-compliant with military safety gear regulations. Therefore, while Terry was an active service member, he always used full protective gear, including a helmet. Once Terry was honorably discharged from the military, and he began to ride motorcycles back at home, Terry decided he did not want to wear the helmet. Terry thinks that his combat experience has something to do with his

attitude now. Terry mentioned that he thinks that his experience as an active duty, military person, although he is retired, has given him the mindset that he cheated death once, and now it is almost a competition to cheat death again. He believes that riding a motorcycle is an adrenalin rush, similar to when he would be in challenging combat situations. Terry thinks that many military people have this mindset. He told me that he has had many friends who upon home coming have been caught speeding on a motorcycle at approximately 110 miles per hour. They receive very high fines because they have engaged in a reckless activity.

Of the participants who self-disclosed that they use a helmet, a great percentage of this same group said that there are rare occasions when they will not wear the helmet. Most riders cited trips “close to home” as an example of a time when they might not use a helmet. Study participant, Dave, gave an honest account of his behavior. Dave said,

“Uhm, I won’t wear it if I’m just drivin’ around in the neighborhood. But, ya know, if I hop on the bike and I just drive around the neighborhood a little bit, it’s kind of honestly, a hit or miss thing. It’s kind of how I feel. Uhm, even though we’re not, I mean we don’t have to wear it. I’m probably 50%, 50/50 when we ride comfortable with it and comfortable without it. If we’re going on a long trip, it’s definite that the helmet is going on. If it’s gonna be a short ride, like on a Sunday morning, maybe 30 minutes, 40 minutes to go get some breakfast, I might not wear it.”

Dave said that when he and his group travel on the highway, they will all wear helmets.

I asked another participant, Will, if he wore the helmet sometimes, or most of the time. Will said,

“Sometimes. I would say more so than not. But, not all the time.” I then asked Will how he makes the determination of whether or not he will wear a helmet. Will said, “That’s a good question, because, I’ve been on the expressway without it. Umm, it gets hot. Other than being hot, I think I it’s more safe to wear the helmet..safer to wear the helmet. But, at the same time, I believe, I *truly* believe, that it’s a misconception of, you know. I think that a helmet can save you with a bicycle as well as with a motorcycle. But at the same time, a lot of motorcycle deaths aren’t due to a person not wearing a helmet, I believe, as far as accident-wise. Your head is very important and you need to protect it. But, at the same time, all these accidents are at speeds where you know, torso and necks and everything else causes it to be a fatal incident.”

I believe the sentiment that Will was trying to convey is that even if he does wear a helmet, there is not a guaranty that he will not die as a result of an accident. This is because other parts of his body will be vulnerable while riding.

Rhonda said something similar to Will. She said,

“My helmet? I don’t wear it *all* the time. I should wear it all the time, but I don’t. Umm, I probably wear it, I’d say, 90% of the time. Sometimes, and it’s on a personal level. Sometimes I feel like, if you have your helmet on sometimes you might be protected. But if you’re in an accident, depending on how that accident is gonna go, it might save your life or it might not.”

Rhonda has experienced accidents both while wearing her helmet and not wearing her helmet. When she was injured, the damage was done to her torso.

Gary, one of the former motocross riders, told me that in spite of always wearing a helmet, he contemplates that he may find himself in an accident when the protection of the helmet will be irrelevant. Gary said,

“You know what, the gear may save me. But, a lot of times I’m thinkin’ I’m dead. I’m dead. You know, at speeds that you would be going, 55, 60, maybe even 70, you’re dead on a road. Because, on a road there are obstacles. There are signs, mile markers. There are all those things. Those are the things that I am scared of because if you’re going to go down, you’re going to slide for a couple hundred feet or so, or roll. Gary continued, “So, I look at it this way. If I go down, which I’d say the chances on the highway are pretty slim, unless something, you hit something, debris, or something that would cause you to crash. I don’t think you would survive what you might hit. It would decapitate you, or knock something off of you and you’d bleed out.”

Gary became quiet for a moment, and then started to chuckle. He said,

“The nice things you think about! I do think about them.”

Gary then let out a hearty laugh.

The semi-structured form of the interviews brought about discussion of injury and death upon the second question, which was about safety gear. As Fisher had suggested, the study participants offered rationale for their decisions. In the conversations with Terry, Will and Gary, the topic of mortality was one they had considered, and seemingly did so regularly. All three of these riders presented the topic of death before I had inquired. All three had acknowledged that death was a possible outcome of a motorcycle ride.

In other interviews the topic was discussed later in the interview. Again, without my prompting, Robert told me about his neighbor, who had been a motorcycle rider.

Robert said,

“My neighbor across the street, Rick, he had a real nice Harley Davison. I was out in the front yard one day, doing some yard work. He grabbed his motorcycle, left. He was in shorts, gym shoes and a t-shirt, and he never came home. So, it was just an act of stupidity. And you know, he got killed, and it was very sad.”

Robert also said,

“I never rode without a helmet. I’ve seen a couple of my friends get a rock in the face and put the motorcycle down. It’s ugly. I just never wanted that. I didn’t want to be, I’ve seen motorcycle wrecks, the people coming out of them, being vegetables.”

From what has been said, it seems that Robert possesses faith that a motorcycle helmet will help preserve his life. Terry, Will and Gary place less faith in the motorcycle helmet, although Will and Gary believe that a helmet may be very beneficial. The life experiences of some of these riders clearly were helpful in framing their attitude toward risk. Two study participants admitted that their experience of being close to a severe accident was the catalyst for their change of opinion regarding helmet use.

Bobby was an experienced rider of mini-bikes, scooters, and all-terrain vehicles (ATV). He had ridden these types of vehicles with his family when he was a child. After Bobby became a motorcycle rider, one of his close friends died as a result of an accident on an ATV. The rider had not been wearing a helmet and he sustained a head injury that resulted in death. Bobby was one of the younger study participants. He told me that he expected to be unique in that he anticipated that others in his age group would not be as pro-helmet as he. I told him that I wondered if he felt so strongly about helmets prior to his friend’s death. Bobby said,

“No, I didn’t. Like I said, it was if I had it I would wear it, if I didn’t have it I wouldn’t worry about it. Especially riding on the street, I neeeeeevvvvvver thought about wearing a helmet when just riding on the street until after he passed away.”

Gibson, in the middle age range of the study group at age 36, had a similar experience. He witnessed an accident when one member of his group was hit by a truck. The motorcycle rider's leg was severed from his body. Gibson saw the rider's head hit the hood of the truck during the accident. The rider had been wearing a helmet. The very unfortunate part of this motorcycle accident was that the rider lost his leg permanently. The fortunate outcome, as Gibson saw it, was that his friend had a helmet on. When his head hit the truck, it might have done a great amount of damage. Gibson framed this occurrence to give credit to the helmet for saving his friend's life.

Specific Relational Associations on Behavior

The first two interview questions brought about responses that illuminated relational influences on riding motivation. The third question in the interview was placed to uncover examples of how relationships influence rider behavior. In order to gain information on possible relational influences, I asked each rider to tell me about who might accompany him or her while they are motorcycle riding. The answers provided a variety of categorizations. Although some of the participants claimed to be loners, others riders expressed many examples of how they join with other motorcycle riders. For riders like Dave it was the influence of his friends, a group of five experienced riders, who caused Dave to become a motorcycle rider. Dave told me that his group stays the same, mainly because of a mutual trust that exists within the group. Dave trusts that his friends will safely operate their vehicles. Dave said that when vehicles are close, he wants to feel as if the rider near him will be able to handle his motorcycle. This sentiment was echoed by other participants. Very few riders participated in large rides, such as those for charity, because they felt uncomfortable riding near others. Of those that told of participation in

these events, they said that they limit their participation to only the charities that are particularly special to them. This is also for the reason of discomfort in a large group where possibly there are unskilled participants. The skill level of nearby riders is unknown in a large group of unfamiliar riders.

Many of the study participants rode with groups as part of their recreation and social activity. Terry, the former military member, rides with friends. They travel to destinations as a group. For Terry, it is as much for the camaraderie as the sight-seeing. Terry described it for me this way, he said,

“Prime example, July 5th through the 9th me and three other guys took off and drove to West Virginia. And, we rode the mountains of West Virginia. And the whole goal was to see the scenery, but at the same time, was riding, the camaraderie, we would stop riding like six o’clock in the evening. And sit around the hotel rooms and just talking and sharin’ stories and you know, and drinking beer. And just enjoying, you know, fellowship.”

Gary was one of the few riders in this study who spoke of participating regularly with a large motorcycle organization. Gary rides a Ducati motorcycle and is a board member of a local Ducati riders’ organization. Gary described Ducati riders in generalities that, to him, characterize his group. Gary described that Ducati motorcycles as being very powerful sport bikes. Although the motorcycles might have the capacity to go fast, Gary said that Ducati riders practice road safety by not driving excessively fast. He said to some people that might seem counter intuitive. But, Gary feels that safety is a priority among his group. Gary said,

“You won’t go to an event and see someone ride up without a helmet. I can tell you, you will not. You’re actually looked at as an idiot. People will shun you off if you don’t come (show up with a helmet). And, even if you don’t come with gear on, you’re kinda weak, you’re not in the “in-crown” and the “in-crowd” is being safe.”

Larry, earlier mentioned as someone who prefers to not wear a helmet, used his group associations to bolster his claim that helmet wearing is unsafe. When we were discussing the fact that many states have repealed helmet laws Larry said,

“I don’t know why ABATE got it repealed, but I would almost guaranty it’s because ABATE is a motorcycle organization. And, I know *very few* people who ride a motorcycle that think a motorcycle helmet is safe. As far as who I deal with, *my* group. And I think that is a general feeling amongst most motorcycle riders. It’s just they’re uncomfortable wearing a helmet because they are.”

Protective Behaviors

When the riders were asked what they do to stay safe, their responses reflected a number of techniques. Collectively, all of these riders displayed a belief that their safety is their responsibility. This means that there was a shared opinion that motorcycles are inherently hard to notice and that drivers of automobiles cannot be expected to be aware of motorcycles all of the time. These motorcycle drivers placed a priority on their ability to stay alert. They take responsibility of their safety by driving defensively. In Larry’s case, as was true for many of the study participants, his attentiveness to road conditions and skill were considered paramount to staying safe on the motorcycle. Larry described that his technique for staying safe involved paying close attention to road conditions and maintaining in his mind a constant analysis of accident avoidance maneuvers for current conditions. Larry said,

“Yes, that’s the key, staying alert. In all honesty, I feel more comfortable on a motorcycle than in a car, usually. That’s just ‘cause I feel like I have more maneuverability with it. I’ve got more control over it.”

When asked how Gibson stays safe, he conveyed a similar sentiment to Larry.

Gibson said,

“Look, look and more look. Like a whiplash kind of thing. My head has to be moving constantly. They can’t see you as well as they can see a big car.”

Gibson explained a phenomenon that many participants described. Most of study participants made mention the problem they face, which is that motorcycles are sometimes not seen by other drivers. Some shared their techniques for getting noticed. Conrad told me that one of his techniques for getting noticed is to position his motorcycle so that his headlight reflects in the car’s rear view mirror. When Conrad sees the driver adjust his rear view mirror to avert the glare, Conrad knows that the car driver is aware of the motorcycle presence. Being seen increases the motorcycle rider’s odds of staying safe, by Conrad’s account.

For the most part, riders expressed empathy for car drivers because the motorcyclists were aware of the difficulty in spotting motorcycles. Rhonda told a story from her earlier days of riding when she felt anger toward a driver who had just cut her off of a roadway. Rhonda, with a sense and look of irritation, glared at the driver when they caught up at an intersection. When Rhonda was able to see the driver, it was clear that driver was very upset at the near miss. Rhonda could tell that the driver was mouthing the words, “I didn’t see you. I’m sorry.” That is when Rhonda realized that automobile drivers do not have a disregard for motorcycle riders as much as a true difficulty seeing them on the road.

The sense of responsibility for one's own safety was echoed throughout the study participant narratives. Several study participants expressed a feeling of responsibility for their own safety. When many of the riders described accidents they had experienced they

were quick to cite their own mistakes. They took primary responsibility, rather than attribute the mistake to the other driver. Some said they were traveling too fast for conditions, like Will, who described his first accident. Will said,

“My first accident was actually two blocks from my home. It’s pretty much a quiet street and I went from zero to like, 80, within a matter of seconds. And, I came up on curve that I didn’t think I could make. So, instead of risking it and going through the woods, I kind of laid the bike down to have a lesser incident, I would say. It wasn’t anything actually. I got a sore shoulder, kind of like after riding a roller coaster at Kings Island called the Son of the Beast. I rode that roller coaster and the next day I felt like I was in a car accident almost.”

Rhonda described an accident caused by someone turning in front of her. This was a scenario offered by several of the study participants. But, Rhonda demonstrated how motorcycle riders go through an assessment process as they approach what they notice as a threatening traffic situation. Rhonda said,

“The third one (accident), that was over in the Broad Ripple area. The lady, she turned in front of me. And I just knew she was getting ready to turn in front of me, just as plain as day. I knew it. Without a doubt, so I slowed down. We were coming ahead of each other. The closer I got to her, I just had a feeling she was gonna turn, and.. so I slowed down, sped up and when I sped up she turned right in front of me. And I hit her. I flew off my bike. My bike slid and I landed in the middle of the street. I was afraid that I was gonna get ran over..is what I was afraid of at the time.”

In both Rhonda’s and Will’s accident scenarios, they describe how the rider calculates an on-coming danger. This is why the riders describe that their primary technique for safety is paying constant attention. Randy said it this way,

“I have a lot of experience and I realize that it’s not ‘if’ you crash, it’s a matter of ‘when’ you crash. Thinking that nothing is going to happen to you isn’t very realistic.”

Beyond the sentiment of vigilant awareness, different priorities were given. As mentioned earlier, when asked what he or she does to stay safe while riding, a majority of participants’ initial responses were about skin protection. Many said that they would

never ride without the skin protection provided by long pants, boots or shoes. Two participants listed a helmet as their first response to the safety question. However, helmet use was prevalent. The majority of study participants declared that they use a helmet always or almost always when riding.

Media Influence

In the interest of gathering as much information as possible on the topic of socio-cultural influence on attitudes and behavior, I asked each study participant about depiction of motorcycle riders in the media. The answers included recollections from cinema, new and old, to television serials to newscast commentary. Some of the participants cited media bias when newscasters cover the story of a motorcycle crash.

Larry said,

“There is a general media bias that bothers me too. It’s just like gun control laws. Anytime there is something like that mass murder at the movie theatre, the first thing they point out is that he bought his guns legally. And, any time there’s an accident and an injury, the first thing they say is, ‘he was not wearing a helmet. ‘However, if there is a death, they will not say, but he had a helmet on. They won’t say that. They usually highlight only (the words), ‘not wearing a helmet’. And that’s why I think there is kind of a bias against them (motorcycles) too.”

When I asked study participant, Justin, how he felt about the newscaster portrayal of motorcycle related events he said this,

“They do their job. It’s, I don’t know, how do I want to put this? A lot of us go on these pokers runs, they drink and that. The media gets wind of that and it gets all twisted out of shape.”

I asked Justin if that is because the newscasters know that there might be alcohol because one or more of the stops might be at a bar. Justin replied,

“Well, that’s where the poker cards are, in bars. And, they think you go in a bar and it’s all drink and that. It gets all blown out of proportion. I ain’t saying that some of ‘em don’t drink, cause, ya know, not everybody can drink.”

Justin felt that the story the newscaster highlights is the fact that the riders on the charity ride will stop in a bar, obviously where liquor is available. Justin said that he realizes that some people may have a drink in the bar but soft drinks and coffee are often consumed instead. Justin knows this because he is someone who will not drink alcohol and drive. Raina's sentiment echoed that of Larry and Justin. Raina spoke of the newscasters when reporting the incident of a motorcycle crash. Raina said,

"I think with the media, they always tend to, I don't know, I feel like place some blame on the rider if there is an accident. Before they know any toxicology tests or anything because often you will hear them say, 'the person wasn't wearing a helmet.' And, I mean, I'm not really sure that it's necessary for that to be said. If you can't say anything else about the individual, and then you never hear them come back and tell you anything positive that the individual might have done. You know, maybe they did great volunteer work or worked for some charitable organization. You never hear anything positive."

Study participants spoke of the influence of the movie, *Easy Rider* and other films from that 1970s time period. In some instances, the movies were credited for being an influence, at least in part, toward the desire to ride. This was an influence from the older study participants. The classic motorcycle movies from this time period were referenced by some of the study participants as a way to explain that motorcycle riding has become more main stream. It was explained that the stereotypes of tough, less than law abiding, motorcycle riders were not at all what the culture has become now. Leslie said,

"In movies it's the glamour of riding. There's really no glamor. It's just fun."

Conrad went on to explain,

“I think there is a lot of way of life that is depicted that people don’t really understand. Ya know, people like to pick out the bad boy type of thing, the negative type that is a druggie, tough-guy thug. It was that way for a long time. You know, through the 70s, the 80s, you know. The 90s I think started changing all that. Because you had more people in the 40 to 50 year old range that now are earning pretty good money. The economy was booming at that time. These guys were able to, they’re getting older in age, they never had motorcycles, they never had stuff, but now all of the sudden they’ve got money because they’re making money on houses, they’re making money on all this stuff that they bought cheap through the years. So, now, they can afford a \$20,000 toy.”

Conrad surmised that the economy changed the characteristic of motorcycle riders’, but that phenomenon has not been depicted in media.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The narratives of eighteen motorcycle riders were analyzed for the purpose of learning the perspectives of current motorcycle riders as they related to protective behavior of motorcycle helmet use. The analysis included a search for and identification of comments salient to Terror Management Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action, two theories that relate to health behaviors. The riders indeed offered perspectives on injury and death, as well as rationale for use, or non-use of a helmet. The narrative analysis included identification of themes that will aid in future study design to test when motorcycle riders might be most receptive to messages regarding helmet use as a safety device. The themes that came forth signaled importance in the categories of personal life experiences; self-awareness of riding technique and ability; perceived probability of accident types; types of physical injury; time in life that instruction occurs; and manner in which instruction is delivered, with particular importance to messages delivered by “experts”.

Evidence of Theory

Four study participants displayed evidence of TMT. TMT proposes that humans suppress thoughts of mortality until something happens to bring those thoughts back to front of mind. It is in the instance that a person’s sense of reality is shaken, or at the least, altered enough to allow for attitude change. Change may come about through an emotional response, or other thought process, that may or may not result in a behavior change. In the case of Gibson, he was present at the time another rider from his group of friends sustained a serious accident. To Gibson, watching a friend’s head hit the hood of

a truck brought a more direct focus on the dangers of motorcycle riding. Gibson's friend endured tragedy with the loss of a leg. But, Gibson realized that had his friend not been wearing a helmet, he most likely would have died. In terms of TMT, Gibson's initial mindset indicated a lack of a priority on helmet use. He did not consider his vulnerability while riding. The event of his friend's accident caused Gibson to lose his ability to place mortality in his subconscious mind. Gibson was forced to face the reality that motorcycle riding is an activity that puts his life at risk. He framed the incidence of his friend's head impact as one that made the difference between life and death. For Gibson, that was the event that changed his attitude and his behavior toward wearing a helmet while riding a motorcycle.

Bobby demonstrated the same type of display of TMT. Bobby admitted to placing a low priority on helmet use. He had years of experience of riding TVS vehicles and motorcycles without injury. When Bobby learned of the death of a close friend, a death caused by a head injury sustained as a result of an ATV accident, bobby learned that a helmet might have saved his friend's life. Bobby said that until this event happened, he did not regularly use a helmet. He admits that this accident is the cause for him always wearing a helmet now when he rides.

Conrad's display of TMT was also very descriptive of the TMT process. When first asked if Conrad ever thought about dying as a result of an accident he immediately said that he didn't see that happening. His immediate response indicated that he felt his ability to remain on high alert and think of his escape maneuver, would protect him. But, then in the next breath, Conrad said that anyone who rode a motorcycle would be an idiot if he or she felt not vulnerable to death as a result of a motorcycle accident. Conrad

speaks from experience similar to Gibson and Bobby. In the many years that Conrad has been riding a motorcycle, he has known other riders who died as a result of MCC injuries. It appears that, as TMT suggests, an event caused each of these riders to lose their ability to keep thoughts of death placed at the back of mind. A significant life event caused an imbalance, or imparted a change that took away Gibson's, Bobby's and Conrad's ability to keep a lid on the realization that death was a threat to them.

Terry displayed another side of TMT. Terry, a former military member who admitted to finding challenge in facing death, as he had in the military a bit of a motivator to not wear a helmet. He said that the mindset he developed in the military was one that believed if God decided it was Terry's day to go, it was Terry's day to go. He said it this way,

“So, for me, if it's my time, it's my time. I've known guys who have wrecked horribly bad and they survived it with no head injuries. I've known guys who have hit their head with no helmet on and survived with no head injury. And, then I've seen the exact opposite like last weekend, full gear, and head injuries. You know, I'm a spiritual guy. I put it in God's hand. If that is what God intended, or how it would be my time, you know, if it was my time to go to heaven, and if it's gonna be from a motorcycle accident where I hit my head and it kills me, then so be it.

And it's the same philosophy I had as a soldier in Iraq. If it's my time to be killed in combat, then it is. There is nothing I personally can do to stop it if that's my destiny.”

Terry speaks of a mindset he developed among peers when he served in the military. The troop's technique for coping with a constant threat of death was to use spirituality.

Terry's mindset stayed with him after departing the military. The rules and regulations that the army imparted for motorcycle safety equipment use did not resonate with Terry after he retired. He provided example of how the attitudes and values of group members shaped the behaviors of soldiers. It cannot be said that Terry is a person who keeps

thoughts of death tucked safely away in his subconscious. Rather, Terry possessed a defiant attitude toward death. Using death as a threat to argue for helmet use would hold no weight with Terry. Yet, I challenged him. I told him that I could understand his concept, but what if he did not die. I wondered if Terry realized that if he sustained frontal lobe injury and did not die, that he may lose his ability to live as he does now. Terry stopped to consider that. He told me that he had a teenage son and pondered that it might be time to lead as an example for this boy. Terry agreed that the thought of permanent disability and the need for a caregiver is one that may cause him to reconsider his actions.

Gary, the member of the Ducati club, displayed that thoughts of death are not kept in his subconscious either. For the sake of further inquiry, it should be noted that Gary was also a former military member who served in overseas active duty in way similar to Terry. Gary's service was a quite a bit further in the past than Terry's. Gary's peers, the Ducati motorcycle club, valued safety. Gary said that his fellow club members would even shun members who appeared at events without proper safety gear. Gary wears a helmet all of the time, and always has. However, he expressed belief that many types of accidents might kill him due to injury sustained on his torso. Gary spoke of driving defensively, use of full body protection, and that he has in place a life insurance policy sufficient to care for loved ones should pass away.

The TRA draws focus on peer influences. Again, TRA proposes that a person's behavioral intention has to do with that individual's attitude toward the behavior, and that prior to deciding upon one's opinion, that person considers how the behavior would be regarded by peers or other persons important to the individual. Gary's story demonstrated

TRA when he spoke of his club members ostracizing members who did not wear helmets. It can be argued that Gary wore a helmet prior to joining this club. However, his comments reflect that he wishes to remain in this group and will likely maintain his safety behaviors.

Terry's peers valued fatalism. They valued the freedom to ride without the regulations once bestowed upon them as army soldiers. Terry considered his behavior to ride without a helmet. Then, he justified to me his decision by referring to the soldier's reasoning. Larry, who disliked wearing a helmet and will not do so unless law demands, also referred to his fellow riders to justify his stance. He claimed that among the people he knows, none of them think that it is safe to wear a helmet.

When riders are new to the pastime, as Raina was, they may develop a peer group when attending a motorcycle training course. Not only are they attempting to gain "how to" knowledge, they are learning about the culture of motorcycle riders. This is an opportunity for trainers to frame motorcycle riding as a safe hobby, and teach techniques for safety. Raina was the newest rider and the only study participant who responded to the safety question by first mentioning the helmet. She displayed a strong belief that a helmet was necessary when riding a motorcycle. Raina did not ride with friends. She had no close relationships with motorcycle riders. Therefore, it is likely that she formed her opinion of safe behavior from her motorcycle course.

Relational Influence

Relational influences leading up to becoming a motorcycle rider were discussed by a number of study participants. Proximity to elders or friends who rode motorcycles was often attributed to the rider's first ideas about motorcycle riding. Friendships were

mentioned as a reason for continuing to ride. Non-military veterans spoke of friendships, while the military veterans spoke of comradeships. One member spoke of the relational aspect of motorcycle riders in a very broad sense. Randy belonged to a national organization of motorcycle riders. He felt as if he could find a sense of belonging in any city, as long as he would seek out members of his organization, the Christian Motorcycle Club. DQ, a younger participant, still had not found an organization where he might fit. He looks for other riders in the area and is careful to notice their “patches” or identifying information. Along with DQ, Terry and Conrad spoke of outlaw motorcycle groups they wished to avoid.

Societal Influence

Some participants, like Raina, claimed that interest in motorcycle riding developed for them by noticing motorcycle riders around them in the community. Participants felt it important to clarify that the persona of the outlaw motorcycle rider was not a correct way to depict the many people who currently enjoy motorcycle riding. Conrad explained that it is common for people to approach a certain level of career success that affords them more disposable income to seek out the hobby of motorcycle riding. He accounts for the trend in increased mainstream motorcycle riders to the profitability that was characteristic of the 1990s and new millennium. Other riders like Dave and Robert admitted that earlier in their lives they would not have afforded the luxury of a nice motorcycle. Robert pointed out that motorcycle dealerships have grown in number, along with the popularity of the pastime. Motorcycles have become prevalent in our society.

Perhaps more compelling is what was not mentioned. In spite of the interviewing providing the participants to speak of media, there was no mention of public health messages relating to motorcycle riding. This was an opportunity for me to be corrected upon my assumption that there are no media campaigns to promote helmet safety. At the time of this writing, no public communication geared towards motorcycle riders has become evident to me on television, billboards, or radio.

Response to Research Questions

Research Question 1: From the rider's perspective, what are the cultural or social cues and common ideas that affect a rider's decision to wear a helmet?

From the responses of this study participant group, the cultural and social cues were diverse. Membership in a group that valued helmets as a safety measure was evident, to the same degree as membership in a group that valued their riding ability over helmet use. Unfortunate circumstances of association with a close friend who lost his or her life as a result of riding without a helmet were cited as catalyst for behavior change for persons who previously had not valued helmets as protective devices. The same circumstances reinforced beliefs in riders who used helmets that helmet use was indeed necessary.

Life changing events effected helmet use. The experience of serving in combat and living through that was attributed to post military non-use of the helmets in one participant. From other participants, increased responsibility in life in terms of professional responsibility and parenthood was also cited as a reasons paid more attention to helmet use.

Riders in this study group who developed interest in motorcycle riding and sought their information from a motorcycle training course, were influenced toward a culture of safety. The riders who participated in this type of course reported to use a helmet all of the time or almost all of the time.

State helmet law influenced usages. All of the riders in this study reported to obey helmet laws while traveling in mandatory helmet states. Societal influence is apparent in that some stated possess mandatory helmet laws and some do not. At the time of this study, none of the participants lived in states where helmet use was mandatory. Some participants stated that although they would not be happy if their state law changed to mandatory helmet use, they would comply because they are law abiding persons.

Lack of media campaigns focused toward motorcycle safety is another factor of the cultural and society surrounding the participants in this study. A campaign to avoid drinking and driving was run during the time of this study. A motorcycle rider was depicted in this television campaign along with automobile drivers. No messages specific to motorcycle helmet use have been noted.

Research Question 2: Under what conditions will a motorcycle rider be most likely to recognize a personal vulnerability to a threat contained in a fear appeal message and devote deliberate effort to evaluating the avoidance behavior suggested in the message?

The motorcycle riders who sought out guidance from professionals to instruct them on motorcycle riding reported to wear helmets all or almost all of the time. This suggests that messages from experts are weighed heavily by the audience. In another instance of expert commentary, it was noted that a celebrity of motocross riding is revered among the motorcycle riding community, at least from comments of those in the Indianapolis community. One of the study participants noted that motocross personality, Nicky Hayden, delivers messages on riding safety. This rider's opinion was that Hayden commands the attention of motorcycle riding enthusiasts, even those other than motocross riders because of his warm relationship with the media.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of health appeal messages, is there a way to capture the attention of motorcycle riders in order to deliver a message about helmet safety? As suggested earlier, it appears that the term public means collection of many audiences. The riders in this study represented many sub-groups of motorcycle riders. Some participants had been childhood riders, and some began as adults. Some were motivated toward safety and some did not place a priority on safety. Also, the riders were at different stages of life. As this study is meant to be a process to learn about effective fear appeal design, it appears from the diversity of responses that fear appeals must be designed separately so that each sub-group may be targeted with a message most likely to resonate with that group.

Regarding TMT, is there a communication tool that may weaken a rider's ability to suppress thoughts of death, without the rider having to actually endure what Gibson, Bobby and Conrad experienced? I believe that creation of a media campaign that is very engaging and graphic, that tells a story of loss, similar to that of Gibson's or Bobby's should be tested. Each of these riders told a story of a person with whom they experienced many years of friendship. The rider lost was a contemporary. The death in the case of Bobby's friend, and the severe injury, in the case of Gibson's friend, caused both of these young fathers to evaluate their own mortality. They possessed thoughts of their spouses and children and the ramifications to their respective families if they would die. I believe that a message crafted to tell a similar story should be tested within print, web and televised media. It will take the work of a skilled writer and videographer to depict a scenario of friendship cultivated at a young age, with expectations for a life long

run, filled with the enjoyment of all things enjoyed by persons of a certain age, cut short by a head injury incurred in a motorcycle accident. A compelling depiction that may draw thoughts of similarity in the viewer may produce attitude changes that will result in behavior changes. I believe that different media campaigns should be designed for different age groups, but with the same mission. Women should be depicted equally as men. Women represented 16% of the participants in this study, but the number of women is growing in the motorcycle riding population. In all cases, the intent should be a rhetorical effort to draw in the motorcycle riding audience and cause them to engage in the witness of a tragedy of MCC without helmet, and learn of the subsequent ramifications that are possible.

Although the majority of participants in this study reported that they wear a helmet all of the time or almost all of the time, their confidence in the helmet as protection was secondary to their perceived riding skill. Heightened awareness of road conditions was attributed to riders remaining safe. The consensus of opinion from this groups narrative is that an accident is certainly coming their way someday, so they better be watching out for it at all times. To prepare to the best of their abilities, many of the riders looked to group instruction provided by motorcycle specialists. These riders spoke of vulnerabilities other than head trauma. They spoke of their riding skill as if it were the most important aspect of their safety practices. From the comments, it was apparent that the facts surrounding traumatic brain injury are not fully understood. Especially in the case of the riders who do not want to wear a helmet, it appears that death is their only consideration. Nothing in the narratives suggested that any had considered that they would not die, but have to live with impaired mobility, impaired speech, and inability to

live without constant assistance of a caregiver. For this reason I believe a media campaign educating the motorcycle riding population on the realities of traumatic brain injury should be tested. Similar to media messages regarding distracted driving, a message depicting an individual recovering from traumatic brain injury may be a technique for associating the act of riding without a helmet to a lifetime need for constant care.

The time when riders received messages of safety precautions appeared relevant in the case of those riders who pursued motorcycle riding as adults, and who also received instruction within a motorcycle training course. Since riders gain their preliminary interest in riding at different times of life, it may be beneficial to deliver messages of safe motorcycle riding practices before one develops an interest in riding. For this reason, believe that information on motorcycle riding should be placed where people know where to find it. For example, I propose a program to introduce motorcycle safety to high school students. Information on riding motorcycles safely should be presented at places where high school students gather. Information delivery should be tested in terms of venue, and age of audience member. Information may be disseminated at sporting events, or in classrooms as a training session. Testing after program delivery may be performed within the setting of a mandatory class, such as drivers' education or health. If study participants demonstrate adequate recall of message delivery then further communication can be designed to enhance the safety education efforts.

For adults, a campaign to raise awareness of motorcycle training facilities should be tested. In the case of some of the study participants, preliminary information was sought at a motorcycle training course. Some participants found a friend or relative to

instruct them. I argue that had information been readily available, and known to the general public, it is likely that more participants would have chosen to be instructed by an expert. I propose a test of information distribution among the general population to measure enrollment in classes taught by certified specialists.

I offer the above suggestions for future study because as societal and culture significance were kept in mind, my task was to identify any communication processes, or messages that would relate to fear and intimidation, or encouragement and guidance that riders considered when deciding to wear a motorcycle helmet. Time, place and mechanism of message delivery influence a person's likeliness to contemplate a warning message (Gantz, et al., 1990; Wogalter and Young, 1998). This insight drew attention to narratives that offered perspectives on when helmet use was considered. Researchers like Rogers and Witte demonstrated that the reception of a warning message and subsequent behavioral change is not a linear process (Rogers and Mewborn, 1976; Witte, 1992, 1993, 1994). What will promote a consideration process in a motorcycle riding audience? For that reason, it was necessary to learn of the riders' relationships and culture.

Future work with motorcycle riders should include their motivations for choosing this pastime. Although the motivations for riding are quite varied in this participant group, the riders' personal accounts provide insight into how motorcycle riding contributes to their life world experiences. As more is learned from the riders about how much of their identity is derived from being a motorcycle rider, it is possible to gain an understanding about the rider's sense of place in his or her surroundings.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS

This study was intended to be an initial look into the study of motorcycle rider safety behaviors. To be fair, the characteristics of this participant group may not have much in common with the demographic groups described as problematic in the NHTSA. Insofar as legal issues, the NHTSA cites that one in four motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2008 were riding their vehicles with invalid licenses at the time of collision. The same scenario for drivers of passenger vehicles is less than half, at twelve percent. Some members of this participant group spoke of their respect for the law and admitted that they were not inclined to break the law. This makes the study participants quite unlike the groups most at risk. As well, the NHTSA reported that in 2008 forty-three percent of motorcycle riders who died in a single-vehicle crash had blood alcohol levels of .08 g/dL or higher. Members of this participant group offered opinions reflecting an aversion to alcohol consumption while riding a motorcycle. From this standpoint, the demographic description of this participant group does not align well with the type of motorcycle rider described to likely be engaged in reckless driving behaviors.

However, the NHTSA places importance on helmet use for all motorcycle riders and their passengers stating, “Helmets are estimated to be thirty-seven percent effective in preventing fatal injuries to motorcycle riders” (NHTSA, 2008). Therefore, this first attempt captured only a small handful of readily available participants. The study participant group provided valuable information, but was extremely limited, due to the small sample size. The work was conducted by one researcher, without financial backing. A funded study that would enable a broader reach would be more desirable. However, the

naivety of the researcher might be considered a benefit. The research was embarked upon with no preconceived notions of motorcycle culture in this millennium.

This study did not address governmental policy. As stated in the introduction, an attempt had been made at the Federal level to enact a mandatory helmet law in all states. There was immediately push back from motorcycle riders. Additional focus on the forces that are driving the policy would no doubt illuminate a vast amount of communication processes at work.

In closing, it is unquestionable that the topic of motorcycle safety should be brought to the consciousness of mainstream society. Today's injury and cost data reflect that a threat exists to this portion of our society, the un-helmeted motorcycle riders. The facts encourage us as communication scholars to find identify patterns in communication and patterns in behavior that support unhealthy behaviors. It is our task to find ways to interrupt these patterns through communication to reframe perceptions and affect healthier behaviors. This research study was done to begin the effort of persuading motorcycle riding population toward healthier behaviors.

Appendix A: Motorcycle Rider Interview Guide

Semi-structured interview questions.

1. Tell me about what influenced you to become a motorcycle rider. How did it all start for you?
2. With whom do you ride? Do you belong to a motorcycle riding or enthusiasts group?
3. What do you do to keep yourself safe? Do you use any protective gear? Have you ever been in an accident?
4. Taking into consideration any media communication, whether it be how newscasters present news bits involving motorcycle riding, or television shows or movies depicting motorcycle riders, or magazines and billboards, do you have any opinions that you would like to share on the subject?
5. Any other thoughts related to motorcycle riding that you wish to share?

Appendix B: Motorcycle Rider Interview Transcripts

Interview 1: Rhonda Baker

10/24/2011

Female, Late 40's

I obtained Informed Consent and the interview commenced.

RHONDA: I approve.

SUSAN: I will start by asking you open-ended questions. When did you start riding and why?

RHONDA: Actually I started when I was in high school.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: I, at the time, was dating someone that rode motorcycles and I was fascinated by them. You know, I rode on the back at that time. And then, he taught me how to ride, and I fell in love with it. There was nobody in my family but myself that rides motorcycles. I have two brothers and two sisters but nobody rides, no one is interested but me.

SUSAN: Hmmm

RHONDA: And the funny thing is as I got older, now, everybody, I mean like my one brother and one of my sisters, they want to learn how to ride.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: They never did, but, you know, they always wanted to learn that.

SUSAN: And these are all folks in the Indianapolis area?

RHONDA: Um hmm. (yes) My son..he didn't want to learn when he was younger, but now, that he's older, he wants me to teach him how to ride. But, I'm not going to..(chuckle). But, that's where I started.

SUSAN: Okay, so, uhm, when did you purchase, or acquire your first motorcycle?

RHONDA: Umm, it's been quite a while because high school was almost 30 years ago, (chuckle). I purchased my motorcycle from a friend. It was a used motorcycle. Probably, let's see, I started out when I was 16 when I learned how to ride. Then, I eventually got my license. It was in my 20's when I got my license.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: And..I bought my first bike. I had my son. My son is 27 now. I bought my motorcycle when I was in my late 20s.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: Yah, my first motorcycle. And, I've had several since because I kinda upscaled a little bit. Got a different kinda bike, a bigger bike, not necessarily a faster one, just a different style. Uh, I used to ride when I first started out, what they call "crotch rockets". They're the kind of motorcycles that you bend over on.

SUSAN: Oh, Okay.

RHONDA: Those kinds of bikes, and a lot of younger people ride those kind of motorcycles.

SUSAN: Is that the type that would do racing?

RHONDA: Some of them, yes. But, I am not into racing, so I don't know exactly what kind.

SUSAN: So they're for road riding.

RHONDA: Yah, uh huh, they're for road riding.

SUSAN: So, who would you ride with, if your family members weren't interested? Was it just with the boyfriend?

RHONDA: Back then?

SUSAN: Uh huh. Then, who else through the progression of time?

RHONDA: Just, in the very beginning, just a few friends, mostly guys, because a lot of ladies did not ride motorcycles then.

SUSAN: Uh huh

RHONDA: Mostly guys rode motorcycles, a lot, a lot of ladies ride motorcycles now. I had a lot of male friends then 'cause that's all I could ride with. I tried to find some females and there were just a few. You know, I might ride with one or two, but that was it. There really weren't a lot of women riding motorcycles then. It's funny because a lot of men would really, really stare, when they would see me riding a motorcycle.

SUSAN: Oh?

RHONDA: Especially, because I looked like a woman, instead of looking like a man.

SUSAN: Like to have your hair up under a hat?

RHONDA: No, just looking, I guess (not) hard core, looking like a guy.

SUSAN: Yah, they didn't expect a feminine looking woman to be riding a motorcycle?

RHONDA: Right

SUSAN: I can see how that would be unusual.

RHONDA: Yah, so they would look and then they would double look and they would go, "Oh, that's a female." And from the ladies point of view, I would get the thumbs up, they would say, "Hey! Go ahead girl! You go ahead on!" You know, that kind of thing.

SUSAN: So, um, you still ride now...

RHONDA: Yes

SUSAN: For recreation, and, how often?

RHONDA: I ride a lot. Actually, now I have two bikes. I have two styles of bikes, motorcycles. I have a Harley Davidson. Harley Davidson is one of the top motorcycles that a lot of people ride. They're expensive bikes. A lot of people sometimes, if you don't have Harley Davidson, they don't want to ride with you.

SUSAN: Oh my gosh!

RHONDA: Believe it or not. They have their own little group of Harley Davidson riders.

SUSAN: So there's a hierarchy to motorcycle riding?

RHONDA: Yah. If you don't have a Harley, some people are like that, if you don't have a Harley, they don't want to ride with you. They want to ride with you if you have a Harley, which I find interesting. I just want to ride because I like to ride. I don't care what kind you have. Um, I also have an older bike. It's an old bike, it's a '79 Kawasaki.

SUSAN: Uh hum..

RHONDA: I ride that really just kind of for fun around town. I don't ride that on long distance rides because it's not a real comfortable-riding bike.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: My Harley I ride long distance. I ride it anywhere, anytime, out of state. I ride long trips. I'll be gone for maybe a week or something like that, with some other friends. I ride now in groups of ladies, because there are so many ladies that ride now. Or, I can ride with ladies and guys too. So, um, I ride it really for recreation. A lot times people hang out for different things, you know, social clubs, motorcycle clubs and things like that. I'm not really a party person. So I don't like to hang out like that. I just really, really like to ride.

SUSAN: It seems like you would be getting closer to nature that way.

RHONDA: Yes and no because, if you ride, you've gotta watch the road. You've gotta watch the people. You have to watch so much around you, you don't really get a chance, when you're the driver instead of the passenger, you have to be more alert and more aware than you are when you are the passenger. When you are a passenger you can ..

SUSAN: Watch and daydream?

RHONDA: Yah, watch and daydream, uh huh. I can't do much of that, because of that reason. But, I won't ride on the back now. I don't like to ride on the back. I like to be in control of my motorcycle because I know how dangerous it can be. But, I know how fun it can be too.

SUSAN: So, you weigh the danger...

RHONDA: Uh huh

SUSAN: And you still ride..

RHONDA: Yah

SUSAN: And that leads me to the question on protective gear. We've talked about this. And I, guess, coming from Arizona too, I know that challenge was getting something cool enough to wear, sometimes, and still protect you.

RHONDA: Ah hmmm

SUSAN: So, here, of course the climate is a little bit different, but summer is probably just as uncomfortable. You don't want to have a lot on.

RHONDA: Right,

SUSAN: But, what do you, what kind of protection do you use?

RHONDA: Well, for myself, probably not enough. I don't ride in shorts, period! I definitely protect my feet. I always wear boots, all the time. I don't wear sandals or anything like that. People do wear sandals and have their toes out, and so forth. But, I always wear a boot. I always wear long pants, mostly jeans, period. Umm, I wear short sleeves and long sleeves. You should really always wear a jacket. My helmet? I don't wear it *all* the time. I should wear it all the time, but I don't. Umm, I probably wear it, I'd say, 90% of the time. Sometimes, and it's on a personal level. Sometimes I feel like, if you have your helmet on sometimes you might be protected. But if you're in an accident, depending on how that accident is gonna go, it might save your life or it might not. I've been in a few

accidents before and I believe once accident that I was in, a particular accident, I did not have my helmet on. I honestly believe that if I would have, that I probably would have broken my neck. Whether that would have happened, or not, I don't know. But, you know, you can't never say that until after something happens.

SUSAN: What was it about that occurrence? Was it vision, or hearing, or, what makes you think that?

RHONDA: That I would have broken my neck!

SUSAN: Yah, that you were better off not having the helmet on at that time.

RHONDA: Just because of the way that I landed.

SUSAN: Oh

RHONDA: Because of the way that I landed. I think the helmet would have been in the way and I think that it would have been more weight on my head..that's just my opinion..

SUSAN: And it would have jarred your neck in a way that it would have damaged that?

RHONDA: That's just my opinion, that's what I think. I mean, but, that's (chuckle) no reason not to have it on. But, like I said, I do wear it 90% of the time. It does get very, very hot, but we should have it. I honestly think that they should have a law here in Indianapolis.

SUSAN: I understand that there was one (a law) at one time...

RHONDA: If there was, then I don't know about it.

SUSAN: Um, I don't know, it was repealed though. One of my friends works in the municipal building for the police and she has been with them for a number of years. She said there was at one time a helmet law. I guess it was the ABATE program, if I have this correct, somehow repealed it and I'm not sure why.

RHONDA: Well, when you take the ABATE class, in order to get your license; you have to have the helmet when you take the class. I never took it because I learned when I was in high school. After riding for so many years I didn't feel like I need to take the class because I feel like the class is going to teach me a different way than I know how to ride. But I do know that they teach you protective gear, riding, and ride with your helmet, and all the safety features and things like that. But, I never took a class.

SUSAN: Okay, so you just studied something?

RHONDA: You can get your permit. You have to take a test. I don't know how they do it now, but back then you took just a written test and you hold your permit for 60 days, I believe it was.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: Might have been 30. 30 or 60 days you hold your permit. There was only certain time that you could ride your cycle. You couldn't ride it at night and you also had to have a helmet on at all times.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: And you couldn't have a passenger on the back. And those were the rules then. I'm not sure if it's the same now.

SUSAN: You can ride on the permit until you get your license?

RHONDA: Yah,
 SUSAN: Okay
 RHONDA: And now the ABATE class, when you take that, the ABATE class, if you pass that class, then you can go and get your license. So, it's a lot easier, I guess. But I still, after I held, I held the permit, I still had to take a driving test. They still had to see me ride the cycle, cause they had cones out and so forth. I still had to get, in order to get my license, I had to take the driving test.

SUSAN: Um hmm. It's like with a car. You can drive with the permit for so long, then you do the two part test.

RHONDA: Um hmm
 SUSAN: Through this research that I've been doing, I found that even in places where there are laws,
 RHONDA: Umm hmm..
 SUSAN: Some people choose not to wear the helmets. And, in the United States, the laws are varied. I think it's very hard for law enforcement to enforce it because some laws may say that if you're 16 or 18 under you must wear a helmet, but not over that age. And how can you tell someone's age when they are going by you at 40 miles an hour? Uhm, so that was one of the reasons why I wanted to do this, or to look into this, because in places where there are third world nations gaining independence and financial structure and the society is moving up a little and they can afford some sort of motorized transportation, they will choose, first, motorcycles because they be the most affordable.

RHONDA: Right...
 SUSAN: So..I'm wondering..what would encourage people to put on the helmet? You know, whether or not there's a law in place. I'm not an advocate of more laws. But, there's different appeals out, persuasive appeals. One of them is a fear appeal. That leads us to the question of, how scary should it be, ...? Is there anything you're afraid of? Or, if you didn't want to wear the helmet, would there be a message that could get through to you and cause you to wear the helmet? Or, do you kind of turn off those fear appeals? Whether it is something like, you know, don't smoke..

RHONDA: Um hmm
 SUSAN: So, like what do you think would be an effective appeal?
 RHONDA: I don't know, for myself, if there is an effective appeal. If it was *the law*, then I would do it, for me. Because I always abide by the laws.

SUSAN: Okay
 RHONDA: So, um, the fear tactic for me, it wouldn't work. But, if it was the law, and that's what you had to do, that's what I would do. I mean, just like driving, I wear my seatbelt because it's the law.

SUSAN: uh hmm...
 RHONDA: I have a truck and before, you didn't have to have your seatbelt on in the truck. But when they made it the law, I started wearing the seatbelt.

SUSAN: Okay..so you respect the law.
 RHONDA: Um huh, yes.

SUSAN: You just don't want to get in any kind of trouble. You're going to avoid it by abiding by the law.

(Lost a portion of tape. ran out. This is the 2nd half of the tape.)

SUSAN: OK, so you were talking about your friends..they are family people, who are riders

RHONDA: Yah

SUSAN: They wear helmets because they know that they (each rider) are important to their family

RHONDA: Yah, umm hmm. Some of my friends that I ride with, who are male..it's kind of interesting because they will say, "well uh, I have to wear my helmet because my wife won't let me ride my cycle without it, soo..." And they might have, you know, children. Like I said, family oriented, they ride with their helmets probably more than my single friends, period, hands down.

SUSAN: Okay, that is significant because that, empathy appeal is one thing that we considered. Perhaps giving from the perspective of the caregiver, caring for someone who has been in an accident because that person experienced a traumatic brain injury.

RHONDA: Uh huh..

SUSAN: Would you want do that to your mom? Would you want to that to spouse?

RHONDA: Right.

SUSAN: So..in this case the wife says, "go out and have fun, but..."

RHONDA: Right.

SUSAN: And do some of these wives go with, or do the men go by themselves?

RHONDA: Sometimes, yah, they do. They do. They ride together because they like to ride. Some women still have that fear factor that they like to ride on the back. They have no interest in driving. And then there are a few, there are some that do want to learn how to ride for themselves. But, for the most part a lot the ladies that ride on the back, that's where they want to stay. And I think, so they can enjoy the scenery and not have the responsibility that a driver normally would have.

SUSAN: I can see how that would be enjoyable, if you really trust the person driving.

RHONDA: And you have to trust the person driving! You know, you do. And I think, for me, that might be why I might have the fear of riding behind somebody, when I know, like I said, I've been in an accident before, knowing that there's so much that you have to watch out for. It doesn't matter sometimes. You're just in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I know how careful you have to really, really be. And, who else do I trust more than myself?

SUSAN: True. So, you said you've been in accidents. One? Or more than one? Just that you've referred to with the way you landed...

RHONDA: More than one.

SUSAN: So, what were the other ones like?

RHONDA: The very first time that I was in an accident it was because I was going too fast. That was in the beginning stages when I first started riding.

SUSAN: You were real young?

RHONDA: Yah, and I was going too fast. I mean, just plain and simple, hands down, and I was going around a curve. And, I knew that either I needed to lay my bike down or I was going to hit a car. So, I laid it down.

SUSAN: Uh huh...

RHONDA: I was in the grass and I just dislocated my shoulder. So, that one was okay. And I had my helmet on (chuckle) because I was in the beginning stages. Uhm, the second accident, actually, I was trying to help somebody. I saw a hit and run accident, and I was right behind it. So, the gentleman that got out of the car, 'cause the car drove away that hit them, I had him to get on my cycle. And, I was taking him, we were going after the people that just hit him.

SUSAN: Oh my gosh!

RHONDA: So, when we did that, you know, a long story short, you know, we turned a corner here or there. He let the person out that was in his car, and so on and so forth. Well, when we got to a street that had a dead end, the car that we were riding behind, chasing, he put his car in reverse.

SUSAN: Wow!

RHONDA: And he was going run us over.

SUSAN: Oh my..

RHONDA: So, he did get close to us, and he did hit the bike, but we jumped off of it in time. So that one I didn't get hurt in, but my bike was totaled.

SUSAN: Okay, that sounds like a movie or television show!

RHONDA: I know. That was the second one. The third one, that was over in the Broad Ripple area. The lady, she turned in front of me. And *I just knew* she was getting ready to turn in front of me, just as plain as day. I knew it. Without a doubt, so I slowed down. We were coming ahead of each other. The closer I got to her, I just had a feeling she was gonna turn, and.. so I slowed down, sped up and when I sped up she turned right in front of me. And I hit her. I flew off my bike. My bike slid and I landed in the middle of the street. I was afraid that I was gonna get ran over..is what I was afraid of at the time.

SUSAN: Oh, yah...

RHONDA: And uh, I ended up breaking two bones in my back. I was laid up in the hospital for a while. I couldn't work. I had a back brace and everything.

SUSAN: Wooooowww....

RHONDA: So that was the worst. There was no probably. That was the worst of 'em all.

SUSAN: Yah..

RHONDA: But, I couldn't wait to get back up on my motorcycle.

SUSAN: That's different. That *is* different. For some of the people I speak with, the one time they're in an accident, they say they "lay down the bike"..he was in a turn, and, I can't remember if he was hit, or avoiding getting hit,

RHONDA: ummm hmmm..

SUSAN: But he said he just left it (the bike) there and he never retrieved it, or ever got on a bike again.

RHONDA: I know, and in that last accident that I was in, I was hurt, but I was more worried about my bike (laugh).

SUSAN: Oh, soo..

RHONDA: Yah, I really was. I was like, "Oh no! My bike! My bike is messed up!" And, I couldn't wait to get back on it because, I mean, I looovve, that's how much I enjoy riding. I really do. I enjoy riding that much.

SUSAN: Okay

RHONDA: It's a sense of freedom and it makes me happy.

SUSAN: And you're in control.

RHONDA: Um hmm (nod).

SUSAN: Is there any other thing that gives you that sense of freedom?

RHONDA: Not like my bike, no. Not like my bike. You know, if I had a bad day or something, you know how people have comfort food?

SUSAN: Yah.

RHONDA: They like to eat certain things..all I do is get on my motorcycle if the weather permits, and just take a little ride.

SUSAN: oh..that sounds nice.

RHONDA: Umm hmm.

SUSAN: I go for a long walk.

RHONDA: Yep.

SUSAN: I can see how that would clear your head.

RHONDA: Yah, comforting

SUSAN: Yup, let your head open up and let all the bad stuff out.

Rhonda: Chuckle.

SUSAN: I haven't had all that many friends who are motorcycle riders.

RHONDA: No?

SUSAN: Some of the husband and wife teams, later in life, it seems that when people get a certain amount of income, or later in life, where they might have a little more disposable income, they might choose to do that.

RHONDA: Mmm hmmm (nod).

SUSAN: And, they either take the long trips, or they put 'em on a trailer and tow them to some place, like a beautiful national park or somewhere. That sounds nice.

RHONDA: Mmm hmm. It's very nice. But I still find it actually funny when people ask me, when they see the pictures at my job, they see the pictures on the wall of me and my motorcycle, and they'll see the picture of my son and myself, and the first they'll ask me, "so your son rides a motorcycle". And I say, "nooooo, I do." And I just don't get it. I mean the pictures on my wall have me on my cycle. My son is nowhere in sight. He's just in another picture by himself. We're not on the bikes or anything. But, they aalllways ask me, "so he rides a motorcycle, huh?" And I say, "nnnnnooo." And they're surprised, most of the time. Sometimes they're not, but most of the time they'll say, "You ride? You ride by yourself?" And I say, "yeeeahhh." And I, honestly, I don't understand why they're so surprised. I really don't. Not in this day in time. Before I could understand that, but now, this day and time, I don't see how they don't see that. I really don't.

SUSAN: I guess that's true.

RHONDA: Umm hmmm..

SUSAN: I can see that. 'Cause, during my time, I was raised with the idea, "You can do anything a man can do."

RHONDA: Right!

SUSAN: And that's how my family was, fortunately.

RHONDA: Right, mm, hmm.

SUSAN: That is interesting. So what do your other female friends say about that scenario? Do they encounter the same thing, if they're out riding along?

RHONDA: They haven't said anything, you mean as far as people being surprised?

SUSAN: Right

RHONDA: They do, because, if we're in a group and it's just females, I think we're kind of envied by other females, being in a group of ladies..and there's no guys or anything with us, it's just ladies, they're surprised. They're happy for us. They're excited that it's just a group of ladies.

SUSAN: I've never seen that, I guess...

RHONDA: Really?!

SUSAN: Yah. I never paid attention to motorcycle riders until getting more involved with the professor who is the traffic safety specialist.

RHONDA: Sometimes we'll do rides, like breast cancer ride. This year they had one, last when they did it, it was only females. And we had some guys with us, but they drove, and they were riding because, if one of the bikes broke down or something like that. But, this year when they did it, they invited the guys along.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

RHONDA: This year I didn't get a chance to go in it, but this year they did invite the guys to along. It was a breast cancer ride.

SUSAN: Oh, that is a neat idea. Down the street from me there is an Eagle's Aeire Lodge.

RHONDA: uh huh..

SUSAN: I guess I don't get close enough to tell if they are male or female riders. But, I know that they're often coming together and doing something for charity.

RHONDA: Yah, we do that a lot. And there's a lot more fashion in that now. With the pink helmet, the pink jacket..the style, you can see more ladies, of them looking feminine, more than it used to be. A lot more so. So sometimes you can just flat out tell that it's a woman on that motorcycle.

SUSAN: Because of the colors?

RHONDA: Yah, because of the colors and the way that they're built. And I try to always, always look like a female when I ride. Because I don't want, I don't know, I just don't want anyone mistaking me for a man. (Chuckle.)

SUSAN: Yah, you're making a statement, I'm a woman and I'm allowed to do this.

RHONDA: Yes

SUSAN: I think more people, if they would think about it, would think it's a neat idea.

RHONDA: Mmm hmm (nod).

SUSAN: I remember when I was working with you, and first looking into this, Harley Davidson had a Women's Night. It looked like it was really well attended. I wanted to go just to see what it was about. But, I think that one of their projects was just having a night for women who might be interested. Have you ever gone to any of their events?

RHONDA: Yes, I did. And it's a lot of ladies that turn out. They'll take you around in small groups. They'll take you around in like a section that will teach you about safety, a little bit. They're a little short. They'll just talk to you briefly about safety gear. They'll show you what you need to buy as far as jacket, gloves, chaps and things like that.

SUSAN: Mmm, hmm..

RHONDA: They may have another group that will talk to you about the type of motorcycles that they have. If you're in an accident, how to pick them up. You know, different things like that. Then they all come together at the end of that group session. I think it might have lasted for an hour or something like that, maybe a little bit longer. They have refreshments and stuff like that. Then they let you ask questions if you wanted to ask. They had chairs set out and everything. So that once they were finished in each little group, everybody came together as one big group.

SUSAN: To answer questions in front of everyone?

RHONDA: Yah, and they do that at the Harley Davidson shop. I went to one on the North side. I don't know if all of them do.

SUSAN: There is one in my town, in Plainfield.

RHONDA: Uh huh?

SUSAN: I want to go over and speak to the people selling motorcycles to see how they approach safety at the point of sale. But, you're saying safety is a big part of the open house.

RHONDA: Yes, actually I am not sure how they do it, because I've never actually bought one brand new. I always bought mine as a used cause they're a lot cheaper. The dealer I usually buy mine from is in Whitestown. And, how I got to know him is through a friend of mine. She knows the owner. He always gives me real good deals. That's how I always trade my bikes in. I never get one right off the floor. It costs too much money.

SUSAN: Sort of like a car. When you drive it off the showroom floor, it loses so much value.

RHONDA: Yes, it depreciates.

SUSAN: Okay, what's it like for maintenance costs?

RHONDA: Laugh, it can be quite costly sometimes. Just kinda depends. It's one of those things..just like a car.

SUSAN: Because you have two of them (motorcycles).

RHONDA: Yes

SUSAN: And you have to do routing maintenance on two vehicles?

RHONDA: Yah, but you *should*, I don't, I should, but I don't. Umm, I just do whatever needs to be done at that moment. I mean, if it's not safe I'm not gonna ride it. But, it can become quite costly, definitely. But, like I said, the older one is old. It's an old bike. My Harley is the main one that I try

to make sure I stay on top of, because that's the one, they say HD stands for hundred dollars.

SUSAN: Oh, laugh.

RHONDA: Did you know that?

SUSAN: No,

RHONDA: Laugh

SUSAN: Just looking at it is a hundred dollars.

RHONDA: Yah, that's what they say the HD stands for.

SUSAN: So like, how much is an oil change?

RHONDA: Umm, I don't know. Because, usually I don't get the maintenance like that. I'll get other things done, so if it's time for an oil change I'll go ahead and get that in there. I can't say how much each thing is.

SUSAN: So it's packaged?

RHONDA: Umm hmm, yah. Or I have friends that do certain things. I don't always take it to the dealer. They cost a lot more, of course, than somebody that knows how to the work. So,... I think that is probably where I cut a lot my costs, definitely. Cause the Harley dealerships can be, just like any dealership that you could take your vehicle it's gonna cost you more if you take it to the dealer than taking it to an off name place.

SUSAN: Yah, I see your point. I've taken my Honda CR-V, I think it's 7 years old now, that is the only car that I've ever purchased new because everybody hangs onto them.

RHONDA: Hmm mmm

Rhonda Baker Continued:

End of tape:

After tape notes: Rhonda described an accident that happened with two of the four people in her riding party one night. The group was out drinking on Mass. Ave. in downtown Indianapolis during warm spring weather. It was night time. Rhonda will not drink and drive. She tells her friends that she does not like when they do it, advises them not to, but they still do. The driver did not appear very drunk, but did something reckless when leaving the bar. They (two riders) sped up the motorcycle and did not realize that there was a curve at the end of Mass. Ave. The first motorcycle rider crashed into a light pole. (Helmet, no). The rider hit the pole head first and died at the scene. Rhonda feels this was terribly unfortunate. She was disturbed and disappointed that this rider chose to not wear a helmet, and chose to drink, even a little bit. She is always disturbed by this kind of irresponsibility. But, she continues to ride.

I thanked Rhonda for her participation in the study.

Interview 2: Randy Green
12/13/2011
Male, age 50

SUSAN: Randy, thank you for agreeing to meet with me for this interview. To begin, I need to provide to you the disclosures necessary to comply with IUPUI's policy on interviews with human subjects. (Read the IRB information to the study participant.) If you are agreeable to these terms, will you please acknowledge this verbally so that I may obtain your approval on this audiotape? Do you agree to go forward with the interview on these terms?

RANDY: Yes, I do.

SUSAN: Thank you so much for your time today. I would like to begin just by asking you how you came to be interested in riding a motorcycle. What was your motivation?

RANDY: Well, I guess it was when I was a kid. My dad and my neighbors rode. They were all interested in motorcycles and working on them. I liked to hang around. I am the type of guy who likes to work on engines. I have since I was a kid.

SUSAN: Really?

RANDY: Yah, I was taking apart anything mechanical back when I was really young. My mom once had a really nice clock on the wall. I can't remember why, but I just took it apart. When she came home I had all the pieces lying all over the kitchen table. She didn't get mad. She just said, "Put it back together, Randy". And, I did. It worked fine. So, I guess watching my dad and the other older guys work on their bikes was interesting to me.

SUSAN: I can see how that would be a place where you would want to hang around.

RANDY: Yup, all the time. And they would take me for rides, which I liked too.

SUSAN: What did/do you like about riding?

RANDY: Well, I guess just being out, being where you can see nature. You get so much closer to it because there isn't a glass car window in between you and the leaves on the trees or the sky and clouds. It just makes me feel closer to nature, I guess. Like, in the fall we go on this ride, a bunch of us from this one place in Mt. Prospect. When you're riding you can smell campfires and stuff. And you feel the cool air, like, it's crisp. You can't get that same kind of experience riding inside a car.

SUSAN: Sounds nice.

RANDY: It is. Sometimes we go to the same place every year. We have different rides, for fund raising and stuff.

SUSAN: Is this an organization you belong to?

RANDY: Well, this is one of them. I usually ride with CMA. That's Christian Motorcycle Riders of America. But, I belong to some other unofficial, I mean, more loosely organized groups, just my buddies. Yah, there's guys that I've known for a long time.

SUSAN: So, tell me about these people you ride with.

RANDY: Well, CMA is everywhere. They're in all the cities. They have newsletters and the various groups are on stuff like Facebook. So, you can keep in touch. There's always rides planned. It's easy to just show up and become a part of the group, even if you didn't know anybody. They're a really warm group of people. They organize rides to help people when they need it.

SUSAN: More like charity fundraisers?

RANDY: Yah, a lot of the time. But, most of the time it's just to get together.

SUSAN: Is the group mostly men, mostly women, or both?

RANDY: Oh, there's both. I guess mostly guys, but there's a lotta gals too.

SUSAN: I interviewed a female rider last month. She looks like she'd be right at home on the red carpet at an awards ceremony. I mean, she's very feminine. She rides and it's always been her choice to ride, even to go out by herself. She was telling me that she rides with other women some times and they get looks. Like, people think it's odd to see a feminine woman riding a motorcycle.

RANDY: Yup, there are more now than ever before.

SUSAN: She was saying that people don't expect women riders to look sophisticated. They picture a biker-chick with lots of tattoos, metal and black leather.

RANDY: Yah, you see everything out there.

SUSAN: I guess some groups can look intimidating, like the stereotypes you see in the media

RANDY: Yah, a lot of my buddies look like that, but what people don't realize is that these guys would give ya the shirt off their backs. They are always there to help anybody. If you would just go up to them, they'd be happy to talk with you.

SUSAN: Can't judge a book by its cover?

RANDY: Nope, definitely not with these guys.

SUSAN: So, what kind of gear do you usually wear?

RANDY: I got everything. I wear long pants and boots usually. I have gloves and a helmet. I also have denim and leather jackets, depending on when I'm riding.

SUSAN: That's good. You don't want your skin all messed up if you fall and skid.

RANDY: No way! I've seen some guys do some stupid stuff. You can really get messed up. I have a lot of experience and I realize that it's not "if" you crash, it's a matter of "when" you crash. Thinking that nothing is going to happen to you isn't very realistic.

SUSAN: What's your helmet like? Does it cover your whole head?

RANDY: Yes. Oh, it has a face piece that moves if I want it.

SUSAN: So your whole head and face is covered?

RANDY: Yah

SUSAN: Do you always wear the helmet?

RANDY: Well, I haven't always. Once in a great while I won't wear it. I don't know why. I just want to feel closer to nature.

SUSAN: Some people have said it impairs their vision or hearing. Do you feel that is the case?

RANDY: No, not really.

SUSAN: But, there are times you still choose not to wear it?

RANDY: Yah, like I said, sometimes. I mean, I know I should. I've been in some pretty close calls and my helmet protected me.

SUSAN: Is that so?

RANDY: Yah, once when I was young and stupid, stupider, ha, ha, I was drinking and on my bike one night. I did what often happens when you drink too much. I fell asleep while driving and drove into a ditch. I got knocked out. When I came to, my helmet had flown off my head. When I crawled over to get it, I noticed that there was a big dent in it. I then saw a big sewer pipe sticking up from the grass, I mean, the big manhole sized ones. I realized that my head hit that thing. If I wasn't wearing the helmet, I'd probably be dead, or at least brain damaged.

SUSAN: That's an awful thought!

RANDY: I know! I was lucky.

SUSAN: Really lucky you were wearing the helmet then.

RANDY: Then there was this other time when I was all excited because my son had just been born. I was 22. I was racing home from the hospital on my bike. I wasn't wearing the helmet then. I cut across some yards and hit a ditch. It was deeper than I thought. I took a tumble then, but fortunately, I didn't get hurt.

SUSAN: Yup, lucky again

RANDY: I know. That's why I say it isn't "if" you'll fall, it's "when". But, I am a lot more careful now than I was back then. I mean. I've been riding more than 30 years.

SUSAN: So, you said that you liked riding back in high school because your dad and neighbors were motorcycle riders. Is there anything else that influenced your love of motorcycles?

RANDY: Yah, Steve McQueen. He was in this movie. I think it was called "Any Other Sunday". I wanted to be like that character. There were magazines and stuff too that were just about motorcycles. I liked to look at that. Well, anything with engines too.

SUSAN: So, you spent a lot of time riding in the cold weather climate that is the Midwest. You are in Florida now. Does it get super-hot when you're riding there?

RANDY: Oh ya, but I've been out ridin' in every kind of weather, even in the snow.

SUSAN: Riding a motorcycle in the snow?!

RANDY: Yah, one time we were going up Northwest from Mt. Prospect on a fall ride. We got pretty far out and it started to snow.

SUSAN: Yikes!

RANDY: Yah, but it was really pretty. After it got dark and the flakes falling, it was really pretty.

SUSAN: Sounds scary.

RANDY: We were careful. But, it was pretty cold, even with the right gear.

SUSAN: So what kind of motorcycle do you have?
 RANDY: Right now I've got a Harley.
 SUSAN: A Harley? A lot of people seem to think that's the ultimate.
 RANDY: Yah, I like it. But, I've had a lot of others. I've had Honda, and others. I like the size of the one I've got now. Some of these guys I meet I tease (be)cause their bikes are so small.
 SUSAN: Small? Like the ones they call crotch rockets?
 RANDY: Yah, some are like that. But, I'm a big guy and I need a big bike.
 SUSAN: It's probably a lot more comfortable to have something more substantial?
 RANDY: Right
 SUSAN: Randy, can you think of anything else I should know about you or motorcycle riding?
 RANDY: Not right now. But, I think if you wanted to interview anyone else, you'd probably find it easy to get people to talk with you. Bikers are really nice and want to help people.
 SUSAN: Thank you. I'll keep that in mind. I might look on the web for the local CMA association to see if they have any events planned.
 RANDY: Yah, you should do that. They always got something going on.
 SUSAN: Earlier you mentioned a Steve McQueen movie with a motorcycle-riding character. Can you tell me any thoughts you might have about the media, television, movies, the web, or any depiction of motorcycle riding within pop culture? Any opinions on anything you've seen?
 RANDY: Jay Leno, I mean he has a motorcycle collection. You see these shows on TV about custom bikes and you know, the making of how they make 'em and stuff like that. Father, sons, ya know, team, what's the other one? Oh, Sons of Anarchy, which is a spin-off of a motorcycle group. They're showing on one side of it drugs and guns and you know, the bad part. That's just one side. Then you have this whole other side of the people who are out there helping people. The ride for charities, the organizations that do that, like you said, they're the CEOs of organizations actually put on a lot of these programs or help chair the events that put on these programs for kids, for stuff like that. That was one of the things I always loved to ride for, was not only the group of people that you rode with, or certain locations that independent people would go, like the Old Highland House on 41, which was great, on the weekends, a place for motorcyclists to gather and talk, and then just go about your way. The Iron Horse, I think it's a little out west over by Volo, somewhere out that way, was another café, again motorcyclist would go gather there to express themselves. Often then they would head off in different directions and just go. One of the things I like about motorcycles is that you are able to explore, to go out, without wasting a lot fuel, without doing anything, you know, costing a lot of money because it was just you, the bike and a destination.
 SUSAN: Um, huh. It's just you, a little gasoline...
 RANDY: One of the things I miss down here (FL), because there is no change of colors down here in the fall, but to ride in fall to see the colors that are out

there. A lot of times I've had a few buddies called the wolf pack, there was probably about 7 or 8 of us. We'd always ride together. We would ride up into Wisconsin or somewhere else, on the back roads. We would ride to some of these small towns and we could smell the fire from burning Maplewood, or smell a steak on a barbeque. We'd go a little farther and smell the cookies from grandma's kitchen. And, you experienced all these things that you couldn't in an automobile, ya know?

SUSAN: Sure

RANDY: As you're driving by, you don't get these atmospheric conditions, that I'll call it, that get at your senses. That truly makes you tingle and make you feel alive while you're doing this. It may not be a great ride, but just going through these little towns, being a carpenter, I've always like to go through these smaller towns. I've enjoyed looking at the handcrafted work on the older buildings. Cause, being a carpenter, I enjoyed that. Nowadays everything is milled out and nothing is done by hand. Back in the day, you had 20 carpenters making molding or making windows. You didn't call up a hardware store and say you needed a bunch of windows for my house. They made it at the site. When you see things like that, especially on a motorcycle, you see more. When I wear a helmet, the newer helmets are designed now to be cut out more around your face, so your peripheral vision, you can catch more with it. It's easier to turn your head like this and this (small turns of neck) to see the whole picture, that what you could see in an automobile.

SUSAN: Before, did you have to turn your head all the way to see? With the newer helmets, you're saying you have a little more vision on the side?

RANDY: Yes, now they are cut out farther, the newer helmets. Where, the older helmets weren't. There was just like a small visor. Now they are cut out more open in the front by the face, so you can see more. I had a friend that loved to ride on the motorcycle. She didn't like wearing the helmet. I said, "Nancy, you don't know how much you're missing. I could always feel her tucked down behind me when we rode. I bought her a helmet and said, "please put it on." She said, "Well, I don't like things on my head. I feel closed. I'm claustrophobic." I said "you don't know what you're missing until you put this on." I finally got it across to her. She put the helmet on. The new helmets are modular, where, if you are kind of claustrophobic, the whole front will flip up and it will expose your face. It will lock back down. She said, "Oh my gosh, Randy, since you told me that, and put this helmet on, I see so much more. I am not hiding behind you to prevent my glasses from flying off". I said, "now you truly experience the stuff." Besides picking the bugs out of your teeth (laugh).

SUSAN: (Laugh), yuck.

RANDY: That's the old saying, the motorcycle smile, you see bugs. That's part of it too. There's things out there: getting hit by bugs, getting hit by birds, a lot of motorcyclists have done that. There's just so much out there. They tell you to drive defensively. Well, nobody plans for failure. It's your failure to plan. There's always something that can go wrong.

SUSAN: Yes

RANDY: As long as you plan for it, wear your helmet, where you're gloves, wear your leather. I've ridden in the snow. I've ridden in the rain.

SUSAN: Really! Snow on a motorcycle!

RANDY: Yes. Up North. The Harley Marine Corp ride, that is in November.

SUSAN: Oh

RANDY: The Toys for Tots ride, that's in December. So, again, there's snow on the road. There's times I've gone out in late fall when it's been a beautiful day when I left. But, at the end of the day, the clouds might start to role in and you're 30 or 40 miles away from your home or base. You start coming home and you see these black rollers coming in. It starts to feel like a light sprinkle. Then you see that white stuff coming down. You're riding on the snow.

SUSAN: Because you have to get home.

RANDY: Yep, you gotta do it. Either that or try to call up somebody with a truck and try to make arrangements. But, the hard core motorcyclists, like myself, it doesn't bother them. I have always felt comfortable on it. I know my limitations. When you ride in the snow and the rain, slow down. You can't corner as fast. You always make sure you have good tires, not bald tires.

SUSAN: Oh yah.

RANDY: Just for the fact that you know, like a car, you're going to hydroplane. There's that issue. On a motorcycle it takes longer to stop than in an automobile, because you have less tire pressure on the ground, less friction. Again, you can't stop as fast. You may be able to go faster, but you can't stop as quickly. That's what a lot of people don't understand. When they are going fast, they have to be able to know when to stop, when an issue is coming up. If the light that is coming up is a stale green, they'd better start slowing down instead of starting to speed up and run through the light. There's always going to be that one car that wants to get there quicker than you. Being a carpenter, I've always learned that I should be at a job sight a half hour before I was needed there. It converted over into my private life. I don't rush anymore. It's part of the scriptures, stop and smell the roses. I stop to think too.

SUSAN: Thank you again for your time and meeting me on Skype!

RANDY: No problem, take care.

Interview 3: Larry Stetson
8-6-12
Male, age 47

SUSAN: Thank you agreeing to do this interview with me today.
LARRY: You're welcome
SUSAN: So, all that (IRB) being said, do I have your permission to proceed?
LARRY: Yes
SUSAN: Thank you. Then, the first thing that I am looking for is to find out what you're motivation was, take me way back. Did you start riding a year ago or twenty years ago. What steered you to being a motorcycle rider?
LARRY: As a child, I enjoyed going fast. I rode dirt bikes ever since I was probably knee-high. So I grew up on a motorcycle, riding motorcycles and dirt bikes. I guess the first thing was just a thrill of speed. I originally was into more or less into the motocross style of riding, where you could jump ramps and things. So, I liked the thrill of it. That's what got me into it.
SUSAN: Okay
LARRY: So, as I've gotten older, I just enjoy the freedom of riding the motorcycle. It is relaxing for me, as an older person.
SUSAN: Oh, okay
LARRY: I'm not crazy on them, like I used to be.
SUSAN: Yah, I hear that a lot. So, when you were developing this interest who were the other people around you that were riding, if anyone? Was it the same type of bike?
LARRY: Probably my best friends. Actually, when I was in kindergarten that is the first experience I had. His parents actually had him racing motocross in kindergarten. They had a little beginning (set up). So he grew up racing. So, he was my best friend in grade school, as a younger child. That's how I got introduced into it, so it was probably peers or friends that got me into it.
SUSAN: Okay. So, then when did you get your own first motorcycle?
LARRY: Probably when I was around 8 years old.
SUSAN: Okay
LARRY: Yah, I got my first one.
SUSAN: And tell me about the physicality of where you lived. Were you out in the country or in a suburb where you had some land to do this?
LARRY: No, I lived in a small town, but I had access to people that lived in the country. I knew people who had places where we could ride.
SUSAN: So you had specific places where you would do that.
LARRY: Yes.
SUSAN: So that was one style of motorcycle riding and you do a different style now.
LARRY: Yes
SUSAN: So, you've probably had a few different types of motorcycles?
LARRY: Yes
SUSAN: Do you want to tell me about some of those and how you progressed?

LARRY: Yes, I started with just a pull mini-bike that you pulled (to start) and you rode, just like a little street mini-bike. And, I went up to a dirt bike, like a 125. And I went to a 500 and then I went to a Honda Goldwing and then from there I got into the Harleys and had what's called a Shovel Head. And now I've moved up and have got a Road King. That's kind of my progression.

SUSAN: Okay.

LARRY: I went from smaller to larger.

SUSAN: And how often do you make a trade, or what influences you to do that?

LARRY: There, I've gotten to where..I used to trade more often than I do now. The current motorcycle that I've had since, let's see, that'll be .. it's a '99 that I bought in 2001.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: That's the most recent one. And, the reason I keep it is because I've repainted it. I've stripped it all down. It became more of a hobby to me. Once I got into the more customizing of the motorcycle, it became more personal at that point.

SUSAN: Um huh.

LARRY: I've not been in the market to trade one.

SUSAN: 'Cause that is Larry's bike. (laugh)

LARRY: Yes, 'cause in the past I got more into the mechanics of them and putting my own touch on them. So, right now I would say that I am not in the market and I have not been in the market for several years for a motorcycle because I've got "mine".

SUSAN: Okay. And what were the important features that you were looking for, or that you put into it?

LARRY: Well, I've always liked Harleys, so it had to be a Harley.

SUSAN: Un huh.

LARRY: Harley was number one. Number two, I liked the Road King model. I wanted something that was large enough that I felt could carry me and a load on the back, uh. Basically, that was it. I liked the Harleys. I liked the look of the Harleys and the Road Kings.

SUSAN: uh huh.

LARRY: It's just the looks and the sound. That's what attracted me to it.

SUSAN: Okay. It is the sound about the Harley that attracts you?

LARRY: Yah, and I like the way they sound..and the look, uh huh, the crome. I like the way they look.

SUSAN: So sound is just one of the many things about the Harley.

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: They seem to have a real aura about them.

LARRY: Yah

SUSAN: People who want them seem to have aspired to eventually have the Harley.

LARRY: Right. It's kind of in the motorcycle arena it's, of course I don't know about now as much as in the past, but Harley was kind of "the". .what you wanted to get. All bikers wanted to have a Harley.

SUSAN: The best you could get.
 LARRY: Yes
 SUSAN: Someone mentioned to me, in addition to that sound, she likes the fact that she can be heard. In addition to the fact that she wants to be seen, there is a safety thing to the sound. She wanted to be heard too.
 LARRY: Uh huh. Well I can make any bike loud.
 SUSAN: Uh huh.
 LARRY: So, I mean I just I like the loudness of the Harley.
 SUSAN: It has a certain sound?
 LARRY: Yah, the sound of the Harley.
 SUSAN: So, as you, now, you started with your buddy when you were kid,
 LARRY: Yes
 SUSAN: And, you rode with him, so as you progressed and got into bigger bicycles and went from the dirt track to the regular road, who did you ride with? Tell me about that transition, or some of the things that you did once you were old enough and got the driver's license.
 LARRY: Transition to the street bike came whenever I got married.
 SUSAN: Un huh?
 LARRY: My wife was interested in riding and there was no way I could do it on a dirt bike. So, basically, when I got married is when I bought my first street bike.
 SUSAN: Uh huh, okay. So does she have a motorcycle also?
 LARRY: No. That was my first wife. My second wife, the one I am married to now, also enjoys riding. But, my first wife wanted to ride. I was just out of college. I had just turned 21 and I bought my first road bike at that point. Up till then, I pretty much just did it as a hobby, off-road riding. I mean, we did some road riding, but not a whole lot. And, I wanted to do more riding. Also, I moved to Indianapolis and there's just no place over here to ride the dirt bike.
 SUSAN: Oh?
 LARRY: I wanted to be able to ride it more often, so..
 SUSAN: You wanted to go out on the street
 LARRY: Right, I went out and got the street bike plus, I could carry a passenger. It had more power too. I could run the speed limit.
 SUSAN: OK
 LARRY: Without feeling like it was wound up.
 SUSAN: So something substantial and, if you needed to take off fast, you could..
 LARRY: Yah. And on the dirt bike, on the top end, depending upon which one you've got, the size, they're really, they just, you've got to almost max them out to get them on the interstate. And, they're real light. A dirt bike is a lot lighter. To me, I just felt a lot more stable on a heavier motorcycle than a dirt bike, as far as at high speed.
 SUSAN: Yes
 LARRY: Now if I was off-road, I'd want a dirt bike. As far as riding on the interstate with a street bike, I just felt more comfortable.

SUSAN: Okay, so is it (street bike) just recreation, or is it also transportation to and from work, or?

LARRY: It's primarily recreation now. I used to use it as transportation to and from work. But, the traffic gets pretty rough and I don't like riding in heavy traffic unless I absolutely have to. I basically use it now for just leisure.

SUSAN: Do you belong to any clubs or groups?

LARRY: I was a member of the Hog Chapter. I dropped that membership because I am not as active as I used to be. And, then we had a small bike club that I used to be a member of over in New Castle.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: That has kind of faded out too. I don't think they even meet anymore. So, those were the two groups that I was in.

SUSAN: Have you heard of, well, I guess if you were in the Harley Chapter, that was part of an international organization?

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: When you go to purchase a bike, how do you do that? Do you ever buy it in a dealer? Or, is it just from a personal seller?

LARRY: If I am looking, I look all over. I usually check, if I was looking for a bike now, or when I was shopping in the past, I would look at the ads in the paper. I would go to dealers, Craig's List, all those places. Except for eBay. I've never bought a motorcycle on eBay.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: The last bike I bought, I bought at a dealership. I bought it at Southside Harley.

SUSAN: Okay. What I am interested in is, if you are in a dealership situation, what else do they try to sell you? I am curious about the safety products that they might sell you at the same time. Is that even a function of it?

LARRY: They *did* give me a discount on a helmet when I bought. I think I got a cut rate on a helmet. I wanted a back rest. Like I had to have a back rest. I always want a back rest for the passengers. So, I had one put on, but they didn't sell it. It's just what I wanted. The only real safety feature that they tried to throw in was the helmet.

SUSAN: Okay. So, how do you feel about safety? What do you do to protect yourself?

LARRY: I don't like to ride in shorts. That's number one. I've seen too many people, and my ex-wife has a big burn mark. You can usually tell the people who ride in shorts because they've got a big burn mark on their leg.

SUSAN: Oh

LARRY: Cause the pipes get red hot.

SUSAN: Yah

LARRY: And you'll just cook the skin on you. So, I don't like riding in shorts. I always ride in pants. Depending on the situation, I may or may not put a helmet on. I don't wear a helmet unless I feel uncomfortable. By uncomfortable means if I am going to be in heavy traffic. Primary in heavy traffic, is when I ride back and forth to work. I haven't ridden back and forth to work in over a year. I was upset last year because I got a

speeding ticket by a motorcycle cop. A motorcycle cop pulled me over on a motorcycle for speeding.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

LARRY: During rush hour.

SUSAN: Oh

LARRY: And I still disagreed with it because there is no way that I could run 55 on a motorcycle if traffic is running 65. I still got a ticket. I didn't agree with that, myself.

SUSAN: Yah

LARRY: So, helmet. If I were riding to work, I'd wear a helmet just because of traffic and things like that. As far as just riding around where I live, I usually don't wear a helmet. My main concern is that I don't want my legs burnt.

SUSAN: Okay. So, has most of this (riding) been done in the state of Indiana?

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: Now, there're states that I have to put a helmet on.

SUSAN: Right

LARRY: If I am going on a long-distance, I am going to take my helmet. But, the chances are I am riding through a state that they are going to require it.

SUSAN: OK

LARRY: It seems like if you go West they are not required, and South. It seems like more East is when I start seeing the requirements. I don't know why, but. I know well, Tennessee too, I guess would be South. And Kentucky doesn't. Let's see, Illinois..

SUSAN: Not right now.

LARRY: No, not right now. 'Cause I rode all the way out to Sturgis and did not wear a helmet.

SUSAN: Sturgis is WI?

LARRY: South Dakota

SUSAN: South Dakota, okay

LARRY: And then I can ride in Ohio. But when I get to Tennessee I have to put a helmet on. I just check the map before I leave. I check the most recent helmet laws before I take off to see.

SUSAN: Okay. I know, someone told me, that at one time the state of Indiana had a helmet law and then it was repealed..

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: And there was a group that, there's a group now called Abate, but it was a different group called Abate, I think, that got them to repeal that. Do you know why? Or, what the rationale was?

LARRY: For Abates?

SUSAN: Yah

LARRY: Abates is what they're called. Other than they're..it's something that you can't experience unless you've worn one.

SUSAN: Uh hum.

LARRY: To me a helmet, I don't like it. Cause I feel it's confining. Here, I am a safety person. But I feel uncomfortable wearing a helmet. Just cause I never wore one. I put one on, and I very seldom wear one. When you put one on, lots of times your side vision is not the greatest. Your hearing is muffled. So you hardly, you can't hear as well. In helmet I can't see as well. I can't hear as well. And, it's extra weight on your head. And if you are riding without a windshield, like my bike, it catches the wind and it's just, (demonstrates wobbling head). A helmet is unsafe, in my opinion.

SUSAN: That's the first time I've heard that about the wind. So, that could..

LARRY: Yah, wind could, depending on what kind of helmet you have, if it's like an open-faced helmet, wind can actually come up, well, you can actually feel it jerking your head around. You start feeling it pulling off of your head. If it's not strapped down tight, you feel something start coming up off the top of your head when you get to a certain speed.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: They're very distracting. So I don't wear one unless I am in a situation. Like I said, I will wear one coming to work. The only time I am uncomfortable on a motorcycle is when I am in heavy traffic. I just don't like it. I don't know what the cars around me are going to do.

SUSAN: Right.

LARRY: I am constantly looking everywhere. But, in heavy traffic I'll usually put a helmet on. If I know I'm coming to downtown Indy, I will wear a helmet.

SUSAN: Um hum

LARRY: But, other than I that I typically don't, unless it's a state law.

SUSAN: So, if it's a law, you just do it.

LARRY: Right, I've got no choice. I just do it 'cause I like to ride.

SUSAN: Okay. I was wondering, people have said that. I was wondering if there was something to protect the top of your head, but, now that you've told me that about the wind, that would probably not help.

LARRY: If they came up with a design like a bicycle helmet, that might be better. Where it has the grooves in it, and it just fits on the top of your head, if they would devise something like that it would probably sell better among motorcycle riders. I don't know why ABATE got it repealed, but I would almost guaranty it's because ABATE is a motorcycle organization. And, I know *very few* people who ride a motorcycle that think a motorcycle helmet is safe.

SUSAN: Really?

LARRY: As far as who I deal with, *my* group.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: And I think that is a general feeling amongst most motorcycle riders. It's just they're uncomfortable wearing a helmet because they are.

SUSAN: Have you ever been in an accident?

LARRY: Knock on wood, I've been in a couple, but nothing major. When I was riding dirt bikes, I got in all kinds of them. But on a street, I've been in once accident on a street.

SUSAN: And what caused that?

LARRY: I'd come around a curve, and it was a blind curve. They had shut the road down and traffic had backed up. As soon as I come around that curve, there was a line of cars and motorcycles and things.

SUSAN: Uh huh

LARRY: So, there was nowhere for me to go because they were turning traffic around coming back the other way. It was a two lane road like this. I just locked it up and slid down the center lane and there was a motorcycle that had a lady sitting on the side of it, on the back of it. She was sitting like this (shows twisted body) with her arms out. And her elbow hit my bicep as I slid around. If it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't have (had an accident). I didn't lay the bike down, but I knocked both her and him both off their motorcycle.

SUSAN: Oh

LARRY: Luckily, I have not laid it down. So knock on wood, so I've never laid one down on the street.

SUSAN: Okay

LARRY: But, that's the closest that I was involved in an accident. Oh and then there was another accident. I take it back. And, I didn't lay it down then either. I forgot about this one. I stopped at a stop light and a car rear-ended me.

SUSAN: Oooh!

LARRY: And it just, what happened was that the light turned green and sun was in the driver's eye. For whatever reason, he took off faster than I. He just gunned it and just bam!, it the back of my motorcycle. It hit the fender up under the tire. But, that's been it.

SUSAN: Okay. And you were okay then too?

LARRY: Yes.

SUSAN: Yah, I can see that...so, what other gear might you wear? Do you ever wear gloves? I ask because you mentioned protecting your skin.

LARRY: The only time I wear gloves is if it's cold.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LARRY: That's just to stay warm. So, if it's colder out, I'll put on a coat and gloves. But, that's just protecting me from the elements.

SUSAN: Not really from the skidding or anything like that.

LARRY: No, not from skidding. Right.

SUSAN: Okay.. And how does your wife now feel about motorcycle riding, riding with you? You said, she gets on the back.

LARRY: Yes.

SUSAN: Does she wear a helmet?

LARRY: No, she does like me. She doesn't wear one unless it is required. She doesn't like traffic either. If she knows we are going into a big city, she will wear a helmet. Typically, she doesn't, just for what we do, leisure riding around.

SUSAN: So, it doesn't bother you too much. Have you ever seen any bad crashes?

LARRY: No. I've not seen them, personally, I've seen, obviously, photos of one, obviously, but never seen one.

SUSAN: Okay. You haven't been that close to anyone who's had a bad accident?

LARRY: No, un huh.

SUSAN: Okay. So you've been riding for 20..

LARRY: Oh I've been riding since, let's see. I was going on 8, and now I'm 47, I've been riding almost 40 years.

SUSAN: Okay. So you just stay very alert..

LARRY: Yes, that's the key, staying alert. In all honesty, I feel more comfortable on a motorcycle than in a car, usually. That's just cause I feel like I have more maneuverability with it. I've got more control over it.

SUSAN: Uh hmm..

LARRY: I've got tighter places I can fit on a motorcycle than I can with a car. Just like that one instance I told you, if I was in a car then, then I would have been a huge wreck.

SUSAN: You would have taken out a lot of people.

LARRY: Yes, a lot of people.

SUSAN: Yah

LARRY: Whereas, with a motorcycle, I was able to work my way around it.

SUSAN: I see.

LARRY: And a lot of that, I just, I can't describe is just skills that you learn over years and years of riding and wrecking on the dirt and stuff. When an accident or near-accident happens, I've had several near-accidents, you're reflexes just kick in.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LARRY: And I feel comfortable on a motorcycle compared to the car or anything else.

SUSAN: I can see why. If you started your training when you were such a small child, it's probably just like an extension of you.

LARRY: Right

SUSAN: I'm kind of curious for this research what influences organizations might have on what members do. If you were with a big organization, what do they always do? If they wear a helmet, whatever...

LARRY: Uh hmm

SUSAN: But, you didn't do that.

LARRY: Un hmm

SUSAN: I guess I am curious, and I probably know the answer to this because you haven't been in a lot of big organizations, but do you go out with people who might stop and drink alcohol.

LARRY: Not as much as I used to. Years ago I would go on rides all the time. We would go on poker runs, where alcohol was heavily involved.

SUSAN: uh hmm

LARRY: And, I haven't been on one of those. I started going to church here about two, say almost three years ago, and I don't drink anymore. In my years that I used to drink, I went on planned poker runs and drank alcohol and rode motorcycles.

SUSAN: Yah, I hear a lot of that.

LARRY: Yah. Poker runs are very dangerous. I don't like them. I haven't been on one in a while. Just because of the speed, and you get that many bikes

together. I don't know if you know what a poker run is. It's usually just for an event like a fundraiser. Basically, you go to five different bars and at each bar you get a card. At the end, the person who has the best poker hand wins half the pot, or 50/50 or split, or a certain prize or whatever.

SUSAN: uh huh.

LARRY: But each bar you get a drink or several drinks and you get a card. Then you go to the next bar and get a drink and get a card. After it is all said and done, you get 5 cards and the best hand wins. That's why it's called a poker run.

SUSAN: I see.

LARRY: But the speeds increase. I mean it just, alcohol definitely takes a play in part of it.

SUSAN: uh hmm

LARRY: Now there are a couple religious organizations that put of fundraising runs. They do something similar, but they stop at different churches, or Hardees, or Wendy's or places like that so that there is no alcohol involved in those.

SUSAN: uh huh.

LARRY: An alcohol and motorcycles are a dangerous combination.

SUSAN: Right. I think so.

LARRY: uh hmm.

SUSAN: I hear most people say, "yah, when I was younger I did..."

LARRY: uh hmm.

SUSAN: "Why I did it, I don't know". All of us did crazy stuff like that.

LARRY: uh hmmm.

SUSAN: How would you feel if they make it a law to ride with helmet?

LARRY: I'd not be happy about it, but you'd be forced to do it. And, I think my whole problem with it is that a lot of these laws are made by people that don't ride motorcycles. They just think this is the safe thing. They've got some data that shows, I'd like to see on these helmet laws that if there was an increase in the number of accidents. I don't want to see necessarily that there was an increase in the number of deaths, but the number of accidents. I wouldn't be surprised if you don't see an increase in the number of accidents on the states that require helmets.

SUSAN: Yah, I don't know about that. I don't think that that is the case. And, I think that with the accidents, the real question is, death or traumatic brain injury? Because I think that a lot of people say that death is preferable than not being able to live your life as you once had.

LARRY: Right.

SUSAN: Mostly just because it is part of the skull.

LARRY: And then there is a general media bias that bothers me too. It's just like gun control laws. Anytime there is something like that mass murder at the movie theatre is that the first thing they point out is that he bought his guns legally. And, any time there's an accident and an injury, the first thing they say is, "he was not wearing a helmet." However, if there is a death, they will not say, but he had a helmet on. They won't say that. They

usually only highlight, “not wearing a helmet”. And that’s why I think there is kind of a bias against them too.

SUSAN: The things I hear, most riders will tell me a couple different stories. One will say, sometimes I wear a helmet. Most of the time, I do. If there was a law, I would wear a helmet because I am that kind of a person.

LARRY: Right

SUSAN: and, “there was one time that I had an accident that I believe if I would have been wearing a helmet, my neck would have turned in a way that would have probably broken my neck.” And another one saying, “when I woke up and saw the helmet next to me, there was a big gash in it and I was next to a metal culvert, like a sewer sticking out of the ground, and I probably would have died if I didn’t have it (the helmet).”

LARRY: uh hmm

SUSAN: So, I think that there are multiple different experiences for each rider.

LARRY: The problem I have, well, I don’t know if I would call it a problem. The issue I have with the helmet is that the only time you need it is obviously when there is a very, very serious, some things gone bad wrong. In other words, you’ve laid the bike down. I mean that’s when you need a helmet. And I think you just have to take your odds at it. I mean like, safety glasses when you’re weed eating, or whatever. Chances are when you are weed eating, you’re going to get something flinging in your face, so you should have safety glasses on. So, I think the frequency has something to do with it too. Hopefully, you don’t lay the bike down too much.

SUSAN: Right

LARRY: It’s just, and again, I don’t like, I’m just uncomfortable wearing one. Like I said. It’s distracting and causes issues.

SUSAN: It sort of puts a barrier in between your senses and what’s going on?

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: OK. Any other opinions you’d like to share about motorcycle riding and safety?

LARRY: No, that’s probably it, as far as the helmet goes. And as a kid, I enjoyed riding. There is something about feeling the wind and riding and that helmet is constricting and it takes all that away.

SUSAN: Yup, I’ve hear that before. So, I guess I am also curious about media representations. You said before, about the media in terms of new reporting.

LARRY: Yes

SUSAN: Is there anything about television and movies, anything that you particularly like or dislike about the media representations?

LARRY: I don’t like in the movies, especially if you watch some of these like Fast and Furious, and stuff. They show people doing impossible things on motorcycles and it looks like that anybody can do these things. I wish they would portray people riding motorcycles who have a little bit of sense. That is my only issue with media. Some of these movies.. there just, ya know, just too much. Basically, I see the young kid in me. Like I said, that’s what attracted me to them in the first place. I liked the speed and the

rush and flying through the air on 'em. You watch a young kid watching these movies and I think they get a false sense of security. As you get older, you start realizing how important it is to pay attention and be alert and not do the stupid things that you see in these movies. It almost would be better if they'd show..very seldom do you ever see an accident, a motorcycle accident in a movie where the individual is actually, seriously injured. They just get up and walk away from accidents.

SUSAN: That's not realistic

LARRY: No. Right, maybe they need to show some more realism. And that's the same way, you go through any of the movies, with the sex and things. They always show the sex but they don't ever show the babies, people getting pregnant or anything, the real life stuff, you know what I mean?

SUSAN: Oh yah, like diseases and...

LARRY: Yah. They just..go with it. I think the media puts a twist on things. It's just not realistic. So, that's the only thing. And the news media. Sometimes I feel a little like they're a little biased against people who don't like helmets or who don't wear helmets. I've not done a lot of research, to be honest. To see and to actually look at the papers published and see what's out there.

SUSAN: It's a topic that is international. It really is interesting because there are places with motorcycle helmet laws where they (riders) still choose not to wear them. Often it is younger men. Often alcohol is involved. A lot of the emergency room physicians do the reporting. But in places like Belarus and Russia, where the law is the law. People don't usually dare to break them. Ireland is a little different. Pakistan even..

LARRY: Right

SUSAN: It's just an issue to me because as third world countries come online in terms of wealth from industrialization and internet, giving them a few dollars, the population then can afford a little help, like a motorcycle, it may increase traumatic brain injury. That's one of the things that I am worried about. So, it will be interesting to learn why the engineers don't come up with a helmet that might protect just that part of the head and still make it comfortable. Air conditioning! I know that some in the US make helmets with air conditioning.

LARRY: Yes.

SUSAN: I wouldn't want to wear a helmet in FL or AZ. It would be too hot.

LARRY: Yah

SUSAN: Well, if you don't have anything else you'd like to share, I am very happy to have your comments. Thank you very much.

LARRY: You're welcome

Interview 4: Will Bonham

8/7/2012

Male, age 35

SUSAN: So, do I have your permission to proceed with this interview?

Will: Yes

SUSAN: Thank you. First question is, I would just like to know how you came about being a motorcycle rider. What influenced you to want to start riding?

WILL: Initially, I've always been scared of motorcycles, before I even decided I wanted to ride one. But, I'm the type of person that if I feel nervous or intimidated by something I actually want to challenge myself. So therefore, I challenged myself to ride my cousin's motorcycle one day. And, I liked it. So that actually struck me to want to ride a motorcycle after that.

SUSAN: So, what did you like about it?

WILL: The freedom of it. It was kind of a freedom with the wind blowing.

SUSAN: Uh hmm. So was it a summer day? A nice fall day, or??

WILL: Summer day

SUSAN: OK. And, so then it was your cousin's bike. How old were you?

WILL: I would say, probably 25 or 26.

SUSAN: And, how old was your cousin?

WILL: He's about 7 years older, 7 to 10 years older than me.

SUSAN: So you're kind of cohorts, or your closer friend, even though it was a relative.

WILL: Yah, I would say so, yah.

SUSAN: Okay, so you were about 25. So, you rode it, then, and then what was your next step? What did you do to keep pursuing the hobby?

WILL: My brother purchased a motorcycle probably about a year later and he let me ride his bike. That's when I really took it for a real ride.

SUSAN: uh hmm

WILL: So, I rode his motorcycle for about a mile, maybe a mile.

SUSAN: So, what kind of ride? City streets?

WILL: I'm from a small town. It was within the town. It wasn't a city road, but it was in town.

SUSAN: It wasn't too crowded?

WILL: No

SUSAN: Okay. So then, what was your next step? Did you pursue some training or did you go shopping?

WILL: No, just one day I got it together and said I wanted to purchase my own. It was probably about a year or two later, actually.

SUSAN: Okay

WILL: So, it wasn't an "instant thrill" sort of thing, I would say.

SUSAN: You thought deeply about it. You tried it a second time to see if you would like it.

WILL: Right, I rode my brother's motorcycle several times here and there and then I said, basically, I'll get one when I come around to it.

SUSAN: That was nice of him to let you ride his motorcycle.

WILL: Yes.

SUSAN: When you went shopping, tell me what that was like. How did you approach the purchasing experience?

WILL: umm. It was actually in the fall when the riding season was almost over here in the state. So, I went to one place and they cut me a good deal. It was bike that had a little bit of a reputation of being a good bike. So, I just purchased it. It wasn't an impulse buy. It was just like, "this is what I want and I'm getting it."

SUSAN: Uh hmm. So, what brand was it and model?

WILL: It was a Kawasaki Ninja 636 model.

SUSAN: Okay

WILL: Which is a street sports bike.

SUSAN: Okay, so that's pretty powerful..

WILL: They're all powerful I would say. But this one, kind of one those that's a good starter bike.

SUSAN: Okay

WILL: Like on the street bikes, they come from like 600 being a lower one to 1400.

SUSAN: Okay. Okay.. So, this was new, but because it was the end of the season, they gave you a good deal?

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: Okay, so it was brand new. So when you were in there, did they talk to you about any accessories or anything you needed while you were purchasing the bike? Or did you, what did you look for?

WILL: I think it was more sale based. It wasn't for like safety or anything. They said well like, "did you want a helmet and some gloves?"

SUSAN: uh hmmm

WILL: And, I think that was just all part of getting more items sold more so than anything else.

SUSAN: So, you didn't get the impression that they were trying instill upon you safety necessary to ride a motorcycle.

WILL: Correct

SUSAN: Okay. I wondered about that. So did you buy a helmet that day?

WILL: Yes, I did purchase a helmet, and that was it.

SUSAN: Okay. So when you are riding now, who do you ride with?

WILL: I always ride solo.

SUSAN: You didn't join any groups or anything?

WILL: No, I'm not a group person

SUSAN: Oh, okay. And then, what safety precautions do you take? You were talking to Carl a minute ago. Do you wear the helmet sometimes, or most of the time?

WILL: Sometimes. I would say more so than not. But, not all the time.

SUSAN: Okay. What determines whether or not you wear it?

WILL: That's a good question. Because, I've been on the expressway without it. Umm, it gets hot. Other than being hot, I think it's more safe to wear the helmet..safer to wear the helmet. But, at the same time, I believe, I truly believe that it's a misconception of, you know. I think that a helmet can save you with a bicycle as well as with a motorcycle. But at the same a lot of motorcycle deaths aren't due to a person not wearing a helmet, I believe, as far as accident-wise.

SUSAN: uh mm

WILL: Your head is very important and you need to protect it. But, at the same time, all these accidents are at speeds where you know, torso and necks and everything else causes it to be a fatal incident.

SUSAN: Okay. So, have you ever been in an accident yourself?

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: Okay, tell me about that.

WILL: I've been in two accidents. The first one was when I'd been riding for about two years and I was getting comfortable. And, I was getting really good in the sense of learning different tricks with my motorcycle.

SUSAN: uh hmm

WILL: And the very first rule that I learned about riding a motorcycle: "You shouldn't be scared of it, but you should always respect it". My first accident was actually 2 blocks from my home. It's pretty much a quiet street and I went from zero to like, 80, within a matter of seconds. And, I came up on curve that I didn't think I could make. So, instead of risking it and going through the woods, I kind of laid the bike down to have a lesser incident, I would say. It wasn't anything actually. I got a sore shoulder, kind of like after riding a roller coaster at Kings Island called the Son of the Beast. I rode that roller coaster and the next day I felt like I was in a car accident almost.

SUSAN: Oh really?!

WILL: There was a little soreness and that's what I felt after my first accident.

SUSAN: Wow! Okay. No one else was around so you didn't hurt anybody?

WILL: Me, and a friend of mine were there. It was like December. I remember it was a 65 degree day in December. My friend said, "hey, I'm gonna come by there and we're gonna take a quick ride." This was 2005, or something like that. So, that occurred and um. Sorry, I lost my track.

SUSAN: The other accident?

WILL: Oh, the other accident. It was what I deal with more often. That's other people, other drivers who don't look out for motorcyclists.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm.

WILL: It was a summer day and I was in the Geist area. I was on a curve and there was actually gravel on the ground. A mini-van jumped on its brakes in front of me. I then jumped on my brakes really hard. When you're on a motorcycle, you're only on two wheels. When you hit the brakes and you're in gravel, you're gonna take a little bit of a spill. Now, as far as injury, I got a lot of what they call road rash. I had some skin damage to my arms and legs. But, there was no serious damage. No other vehicle was

involved. The first responders did show up. They just put some bandages on my injuries. The only painful thing about that was the shower the very next day. (Laugh)

SUSAN: Oooh, ouch. So did you have a helmet on in either of those accidents?

WILL: The first accident I did have a helmet on. I did hit my head on the first accident. It wasn't a bang. I knew my head hit the ground, though. But, I did have a helmet on. The second one, I did not have a helmet on. I didn't hit my head. Fortunately, I did not. It was at a lower speed. It was probably at a speed of 20-30 mph.

SUSAN: Okay, well that's better, I guess.

WILL: Oh definitely. I was on ground, the one in December, I was on in the grass, in the first accident. The second one, it was on pavement.

SUSAN: I can see how that would really eat up your skin.

WILL: Oh! Once I felt my skin being peeling, I was sliding, once I felt my skin being peeled on my left side, I forced my body to try to get on my back. And, you know the g-force pushed me to the right side of my body. But, I finally got to my back where you know, I had more clothing on. I couldn't get scarred up too badly there.

SUSAN: Thankfully! Yah! And do you wear, do you ever go in shorts? Or, do you always make sure that you have long pants on?

WILL: I had shorts on because, actually, I was going to make just a quick run. So it was just a quick run to pick up something and drop it off. Probably about 2 miles away from the home as well.

SUSAN: Do you ever take longer trips like through the state or into another state?

WILL: Once a year I probably take a 3 to 4 hour ride and that's to where I am going and back.

SUSAN: Is that to a different place every time?

WILL: No, the same place, inside the state.

SUSAN: And it is fall? Or, to see the colors or anything.

WILL: No, summer

SUSAN: I hear it nice to go out in the fall to see the colors.

WILL: Oh yes! It is.

SUSAN: So, thinking of media, any kind of media, like our pop culture, movies, television, the newscasts, is there anything that comes to your mind about motorcycle riders that you like or you don't.

WILL: Speaking of culture, riding the motorcycle, probably about right when I first started riding, it was almost considered "the thing to do." If you rode a motorcycle, you would have females come to you, I mean not know you from anything and say, "Hey, can I get on and get a ride?" There's been a new era of motorcycle riders that's come along to where, I believe, has sort of been a trend type of thing. I believe that you don't have a traditional rider anymore who, I would say respects the motorcycle itself. I would say the culture has changed a whole lot to whereas you don't get the attention that you usually get. It's more of a scare tactic now. Every time I hear more about motorcycles now, about how "oh you ride motorcycles? You shouldn't do that." I hear that more often now than I

used to when I initially started riding. And, I don't know exactly how many more accidents there are compared to what used to be. But, definitely in my circle of people that I deal with, I hear that more often now.

SUSAN: Different than it used to be?

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: OK, and do you mind if I ask you how old you are now?

WILL: I am 35 years old.

SUSAN: OK, so this has been about a 10 year thing for you.

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: So you have 10 years of experience.

WILL: Correct

SUSAN: So, one of the things that I've noticed, and I've talked with one of my friends in the Phoenix area, where I used to live, that there are Harley Davidson dealerships popping up everywhere. I know there are quite a few of them here in the Indianapolis area.

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: From that standpoint, I might guess that the industry is growing. Or, that the popularity of riding is growing.

WILL: It has. And that's why I think that we have a different group of riders now. I think it was a sense where, especially in a group of road bikes, like the Harley Davidson, you just couldn't go out and ride a Harley Davidson and speak to someone and be a part of a group. You know, there'd almost be like a brawl or something like that. "Hey! You're not a rider! You don't belong in this class of riders." But now, it's marketed and I think that's the biggest thing. There's a certain class of people that you want, or group, or whatever. But, at the same time, the bottom line is marketing and making money. So that's why you get a different group now days.

SUSAN: I am so curious; I am becoming more curious about this as I talk with more people. I know that they (Harley Davidson) have special events for women. They'll have a night to invite women and say, "come and learn about this." I know that is a demographic that's growing within Harley Davidson. Now, there might the same with other makers, too. I haven't looked into it. But, I wonder what the mystique is about Harleys. But, maybe it is the marketing. They just know what they're doing more than other companies.

WILL: (Laugh) Harley is a good bike, though. They carry a tradition, the "American made". That's the one thing that has been working for it, definitely. That, as well. Just the culture of it, there is a movie that comes to mind. With Tim Allen, Martin Lawrence...

SUSAN: Wild Hogs?

WILL: Yes, Wild Hogs. Yah, that just comes perfectly to mind how the rider, the average rider, versus, you know, who the Wild Hogs were. So, that kind of actually on time, that movie was, as far as what you see, as far as the culture of riding motorcycles.

SUSAN: Okay. I've watched it a few times. I'll have to watch it again.

WILL: (laugh)

SUSAN: Can you think of any other movies or television shows where it (motorcycle riding) has been represented and it's caught your attention?

WILL: There is a movie with Lawrence Fishburn and Derek Luke, I don't know why I know these people's names, but I watch a lot of TV.

SUSAN: I don't know who Derek Luke is, but I know Lawrence Fishburn.

WILL: It was a motorcycle group, actually a sports bike, more like I ride that a Harley.

SUSAN: uh hmm

WILL: It was actually a motorcycle group where they were racers and did other cultural things inside of it. In that, I could see and identify with. For myself personally, I'm kind of a soloist. I never go out to the Broadripple are and post up with all the motorcyclists out there and hang out. I might see a couple guys that I may know. Very few and far between actually, it hasn't been in the last several years that they say, "hey, where you going? Let's ride out a little bit and we'll just turn a couple of corners." That's what they say. I just do it for my own personal enjoyment more so than anything else.

SUSAN: So, is it a stress reliever to just get on your bike and go out sometimes?

WILL: It is. And, it's a freedom, in a sense, sometimes. Other times, it's convenient.

SUSAN: Uh hmm.

WILL: Convenient to park in certain places that you couldn't park if you had a vehicle. I think about a concert. I went to a Bootsie Collins concert in Broadripple and I said, "I'm going to ride my motorcycle and I know I'll be able to park somewhere very convenient."

SUSAN: That's a stress reliever right there!

WILL: Those are the perks.

SUSAN: Yah, that's a good thing.

WILL: You have different things with that as well because, well, I have a golden rule that I won't even sip a drink of any alcoholic beverages when I ride my motorcycle. Not even a sip of beer or wine or anything, that's just a golden rule of mine that I have to stand by.

SUSAN: Okay, I was going to ask you that. That was interesting that you offered it.

WILL: Well, you know, just going to a concert and being amongst, well, the concert place is like a bar, a club, whatever. And then you're right there where they have alcoholic beverages and so forth. But, it's not even an option for me to think, "if I just have one beer, I should be ok." I think I would be okay. But at the same time, it's just nothing I want to dabble in at all.

SUSAN: No. Yah, that's not something to take a chance on. And I would think that there might be some police watching you when you walked out of that place, too.

WILL: Well I know a lot of guys that do it and they're fine with it. You know I think that every man is responsible as a man. But as a friend, I would definitely, you know, say, "hey, you sure you want to do this?"

SUSAN: So, have you been close to an accident, or anyone who's ever really been hurt in an accident.

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: How close? Were you there to witness it, or was it someone that was in an accident and you had been close with them?

WILL: It was a death.

SUSAN: Ohh (sigh)

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: In a group setting? What was the information?

WILL: As far as?

SUSAN: Did it happen nearby? Or was it expected because of the person's behavior?

WILL: We were all, it was alcohol involved, actually. There was an accident. There was a group of friends amongst friends. One person was drinking and went to ride, was told, "no, it's not a good idea" but they got on anyway and had an accident. They were by themselves. But, it was a death and he died from the accident itself.

SUSAN: Okay. Had you already established your No Alcohol rule for yourself before that?

WILL: Yah, it was already a rule of mine for myself. Of course, that probably put the shining on it for me to even consider it.

SUSAN: More deeply engrained than before...

WILL: Yes

SUSAN: Well, that's all the questions I have, unless there is anything else you want to tell me about policy or any other ideas that revolve around motorcycle riding.

WILL: Well, I would say, for myself, I never took any training. No one ever told me how to ride a motorcycle. I just got on it one day. I took it slow. Initially, like I said, I rode my cousin's motorcycle. Then my brother got one a year later. I rode his motorcycle a couple of times. Then when I finally got my own motorcycle, I only stayed in my area, I had an apartment, I only stayed in my area for that whole season from August until I couldn't ride anymore, like November. I didn't even get on the expressway at all. So, I took my time. Once I got my license, I still took my time. To be honest, I would recommend for someone to take a class, definitely, if they wanted to be a safer rider. Because, I was smart enough to take my time. But, at the same time, I had my own growing pains from hotdogging it and having my accident from learning how to ride wheelies and burnout and stuff like that, which isn't even funny to me anymore. So, the best advice I've always gotten was that you should never fear the bike, but you should always respect it.

SUSAN: OK. Do you still have that same Kawasaki?

WILL: No, I traded it in actually, the next year.

SUSAN: For another sports bike?

WILL: Yes. They actually gave me what I paid for it too. They gave me an Italian bike.

SUSAN: What's the brand?
WILL: it's an Aprilia
SUSAN: Okay
WILL: Aprilia. That's the bike I have now.
SUSAN: Well, that was kind of interesting. They gave you a great deal on that one, and then a year later, was in good enough shape...
WILL: Right
SUSAN: same place?
WILL: No, different place. Like I said, it was the end of the season and I didn't ride it much because I was still learning how to ride. It only had like 400 – 500 miles on it.
SUSAN: Okay. I haven't heard of that brand. I'm glad you told me about it.
WILL: Yes. Aprilia
SUSAN: OK. Well, thank you for your time. I am just thrilled that I am among so many riders and that I get such great information.
WILL: You're welcome

Interview 4: Ralph Stokes
 08/09/12
 Male, age 60

Read IRB requirements, obtained verbal permission to proceed.

SUSAN: First question I ask everyone is just if they would tell me a little bit about how they became motorcycle riders. What influenced you? When did you first have an interest?

RALPH: I guess I first started when I was in college. I got a motorcycle sophomore year probably. I rode it a couple years just because it was cheap transportation, I think, and it was something I liked to do. Then, when I graduated, I drove it over to Indianapolis and I had a wreck the first day coming home from work. A guy made a left hand turn in front of me, so I said, "okay, this isn't a place for motorcycles, in Indianapolis." I didn't have one again until about three years ago. Then I got one because I thought I could use it with an RV I had to get me transportation. I have one. I don't ride it a whole lot.

SUSAN: So, you have an RV. And do you tow it? (meaning the motorcycle behind the RV)

RALPH: I have. I haven't used the RV for a while. So, I haven't used that to tow it.

SUSAN: Okay

RALPH: Mainly, it's been sitting the garage mostly for the past couple of years.

SUSAN: Okay. So, when you went to get another one, did you do it because you thought, "well, when I park my camper or my trailer, then this will be a way to get around?"

RALPH: Yah, mostly

SUSAN: Okay. And what kind of motorcycle is it?

RALPH: A Suzuki 700, I believe.

SUSAN: Is that called a road bike?

RALPH: Yes

SUSAN: Back to the college days, it was just cheap transportation. Or, was it something more enjoyable?

RALPH: I don't really remember riding it a whole lot back then. I remember working hard one summer and thinking that was a nice thing to buy. I rode it around quite a bit at first, as I recall, in the summers.

SUSAN: Okay

RALPH: I took it to school. I didn't have to travel very far when I was at school, so I didn't have to ride it to school or anything.

SUSAN: I see. When you had been riding, either back in college days, or recently, do you ride with other people? Do you belong to organizations?

RALPH: No

SUSAN: No. It's just you.

RALPH: Right

SUSAN: Is it more transportation for you?

RALPH: Yes, it's a different type of transportation. It's not something that I just go out and ride for hours just to be riding. I don't find a destination and say, "let's go ride to it". I mean, I have a few times, but it's not something I regularly do.

SUSAN: Okay, and do you do that by yourself, still?

RALPH: Umm, yah

SUSAN: You don't have a lot of other friends, or a few friends that ride motorcycles.

RALPH: No

SUSAN: Okay

RALPH: I don't know anybody that rides a motorcycle

SUSAN: Okay

RALPH: Except the people around here (in his office)

SUSAN: Yah! I was surprised. I'm lucky that there is that many people around here.

RALPH: I always said that I wasn't going to get one because I didn't think they were safe. I finally relented, though.

SUSAN: Well...

RALPH: I'm still nervous on the road, and really don't like to ride in heavy traffic or anything.

SUSAN: Umm hmm. I do hear that a lot. So what do you do to protect yourself when you are riding?

RALPH: Well, most all the time I wear leather, and I always wear a helmet.

SUSAN: um hmmm

RALPH: I always wear a helmet, unless I'm just warming up the motorcycle in the neighborhood. I ride it two or three minutes without one.

SUSAN: Okay

RALPH: When I'm ride I always wear a helmet; probably 90% of the time, leather.

SUSAN: And long pants?

RALPH: 99% of the time long pants.

SUSAN: Okay, yah, I heard that you can a burn on your leg if you're not careful.

RALPH: I got one once, and that was when I was camping and it wasn't fun. Now I'm like, you shouldn't wear shorts and ride a motorcycle. You just have to be very, very careful. I see that all the time! I see people in flip flops and shorts, especially passengers. They're idiots!

SUSAN: I think so too. That would hurt.

RALPH: Yah, that did hurt. You do that once and you remember. They don't insulate those motorcycle mufflers near as what they should. I think it's ridiculous.

SUSAN: That's what it sounds like.

RALPH: And they make them too loud. That's ridiculous. Don't get me started on that.

SUSAN: Laugh.

RALPH: A Harley, how loud they are.

SUSAN: Yes, I guess that they are loud and distinctive.

RALPH: Yah, that's the coolness factor.

SUSAN: So, have you ever had an accident?

RALPH: Just that one.

SUSAN: When you burned your leg?

RALPH: When the guy did the left-hand turn in front of me.

SUSAN: Oh yah, (embarrassed)

RALPH: Oh, I totaled the motorcycle. And, got hurt a little bit.

SUSAN: Umm hummm.

RALPH: I saw him early enough that I was putting on the breaks and tried to miss him. But, the back of him. Muffled, muffled, muffled. I was 23. No more motorcycles in Indianapolis.

SUSAN: And, when you think of how motorcycle riding or riders are portrayed in any media: pop culture, movies, the way they report the news, do you have any thoughts about any of that?

RALPH: No really. Some of it's true, some not. Some of it's probably somewhat true for a segment of the population. People ride motorcycles for different reasons. Some of them are in clubs, some adapt the culture of the club, whatever that may be, whether it's gang related type stuff or just doing the right thing, the veterans. You can't stereotype a motorcycle rider.

SUSAN: That's what I see. I know maybe 10 years ago if you would have asked me I would think that they were kind of scary and dangerous. But then, I see so many charity rides and all those things, soo. And I thought, maybe it's just cheap transportation. I find a lot of people, especially around a campus who opt to get a motorcycle for that reason.

RALPH: Oh yah, it's cheap transportation for a lot of people. You get 50 miles per gallon. I mean they aren't great. My car gets better gas mileage than my motorcycle probably does.

SUSAN: Un hummm.

RALPH: So, sometimes it's better and cheaper to maintain.

SUSAN: And, anything about policy? If you've been in the state for a while, you might have around when there was a helmet law, and then the ABATE organization, I think, was active in repealing it. This is not something I've researched very deeply. But, I know that there was a policy, and then there wasn't. Do you recall anything around that event?

RALPH: I don't know that event but I remember when I was first riding I had to have a helmet. It was law. (inaudible muffle) As far as I know, some point in time, they started requiring that you have a separate license to ride a motorcycle. That was a pain to go through that to get my license to have a motorcycle.

SUSAN: Was that a written test and then a road test?

RALPH: Not really a road test, but a parking lot test, where they take you through cones.

SUSAN: umm hmm.

RALPH: If you have a small motorcycle it's a lot easier than a big motorcycle. If you've got a big motorcycle, you can't pass it. I mean, it's really ridiculous, so in some aspects, they should just have a standard motorcycle

there and you could ride it if you want to. I made it through mine, but I'd done some practicing too.

SUSAN: Okay. So, if they put the helmet law back in place, you're okay with it because you ride with it most of the time?

RALPH: Right. I think they should. I don't know how you can require a seat belt and not require a helmet. But, I guess that's people's personal choice. It's natural selection.

SUSAN: Laugh, yah, I guess.

RALPH: The problem is they don't all die and then we've got people being a burden to society.

SUSAN: Or someone.

RALPH: or someone.

SUSAN: Yah. I think if that could just be alleviated, or if we could reduce those rates, that would make a big difference, but... From what I hear from people, and I've only been on 'em, maybe once in a forest preserve for about a ¼ mile at 15 mpg as a rider, but when people talk about going out on a ride on a beautiful fall day when the colors are in season, and liking the feel of the wind in their hair and the sun on their face, I have to say, "it's sounds pretty good to me" but, I think I would still be too afraid to do that.

RALPH: You can pull up your shield as far as I am concerned.

SUSAN: Um, hmm, laugh.

RALPH: I'm not going to debate that cause I'm really a pretty strong proponent of helmets. I mean, if I get a flat tire, or if someone takes a left turn in front of me, or hit a rock, or hit a curb, or lose your balance on the road, do you want your head hitting the ground unprotected? I don't want that, but that's me.

SUSAN: And do you think that you can see well and hear well when you are wearing the helmet?

RALPH: Oh ya.

SUSAN: So that's fine. Any other opinions on motorcycle riding or motorcycle riders?

RALPH: No, it's just that when I'm in rush hour traffic on 465 I just think you're putting your life at risk really, at a high risk, cause that's what I see. They could come over and get hit, if you didn't see them. I never ride on 465. When I come down from Noblesville, I take Allisonville or something. I've only ridden down here once, when I had to do a vehicle change. I guess I rode it down with the RV. Cause I live alone. With the RV, it's hard to take it somewhere and get work done. So, that was one of the reasons why I had it. I could tow the motorcycle, drop the RV off for work, then ride the motorcycle to work.

SUSAN: People say, "watch because cars don't look out for you." And, I think I do, but I think there are sometimes when there's just, you know, a motorcycle that is small and if someone is in your blind spot and moving at the same rate,

RALPH: Right

- SUSAN: It sometimes is hard to see them, even if you are looking for them.
- RALPH: Oh yah. It is. That's the reason I don't think you can blame the motorist, necessarily. They didn't see him. But, if they hit someone in a car, they are less likely to die if you hit the car. Some of these motorcycle guys are ridiculous with their speeding and swerving and cutting through traffic. You know, if they are going a lot faster than the traffic, you might not see them. I've been out before when all of the sudden there is a motorcycle right there and I never saw it coming. So, it's just a dangerous sport, I think. If you're doing statistics, I assume that there is a high death rate for people in accidents, more for motorcycles versus cars, basically higher.
- SUSAN: Uh, yah. It goes up. It gets worse in states where they have a law and then they repeal it. There is evidence to show that the accidents are severe again. Not sure where I'm going with this.
- RALPH: That's what I was wondering. (laugh) That was one of my questions, was uhm, what is the purpose of your research?
- SUSAN: My purpose is as a communications person, I like to find out how people communicate about a certain concept. So, I wanted know their narrative on their feelings of safety and protecting themselves when riding a motorcycle. Another thing I heard in this research is that as third world nations are coming on line in terms of economic rise, in terms of industry, and they are getting a little bit more wealth, the first step for a lot of people will be to buy motorcycles. If they aren't going to have a helmet law, or knowledge of how helmets protect, there's just going to be that many more deaths in those areas as well. I guess I am more interested in the big mass media perspective on changing health behaviors.
- RALPH: Well, it will be interesting to see what ended up happening after the law was changed. It didn't impact me at the time, so I didn't pay much attention. Obviously, the legislators got lobbied by somebody.
- SUSAN: Right. And, I think a good thing for me is that I am completely naïve. I don't come from a motorcycle riding family or group of friends. I didn't have an interest. So, if someone tells me that yes, they would be a good idea, but I can't see or hear as well, and enough people tell me that, then I think there is enough reason to approach the people who make the helmets and say, we have to do this differently. But, I don't have an opinion one way or the other.
- RALPH: I think they are making up stuff when they say they can't hear as well. The guy was probably riding a Harley anyway, which makes so you can't hear anyway. I can't hear anything, I have to say, when they go by because they are so loud. And, supposedly, that is one of their defense mechanisms. They are so loud, people hear them coming.
- SUSAN: That's what I've heard, but I had someone else tell me, "well, I could make any motorcycle loud, if I wanted."
- RALPH: Yah, you take the baffles out.
- SUSAN: Thank you. End of interview.

Interview 6: Scott Kendall

8/9/12

Male, age 28

SUSAN: After reading the IRB disclosure, “do I have your permission to proceed with the interview?”

SCOTT: Yes, now I am kind of wondering what kind of questions you’re gonna be asking. (Laugh)

SUSAN: (Laugh) That is just standard IRB stuff. They take the human element and the protection of anyone very seriously.

SCOTT: Yes

SUSAN: What I want to know, take me back to the very beginning, what was your motivation to ride when you first started, whatever age that was?

SCOTT: Well, I was originally raised in Southern California. And, I was at 20 and it just seemed like a cool, it seems weird now living in Indiana, but it seemed like a hipster thing to do, to get a scooter and ride it around. Now that I live in Indiana, I know that’s not the case. But, you know, I grew up kind of near a college town and then it seemed there were a lot of people riding ‘em and it seemed really cool.

SUSAN: Near what college town?

SCOTT: Near UC Santa Barbara

SUSAN: Okay. I know the area a little bit.

SCOTT: Yah?

SUSAN: I know Santa Maria, and is it called Galetas?

SCOTT: Yah, alright, so you’re familiar

SUSAN: A bit

SCOTT: I don’t know. I don’t really have like a super cool story, other than just...

SUSAN: That’s what they did there?

SCOTT: Yah..and I was kind of, the kind of kid who just had a, I don’t know, my girlfriend says a wild hair u[his ass (giggle).

SUSAN: Wanderlust?

SCOTT: Yah, I was always kind of that like I just wanted to do something different than other people, in my family, specifically.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

SCOTT: I just wanted to venture out and do something like that (muffled)

SUSAN: So were they a little bit more conservative and wouldn’t ride scooters?

SCOTT: Not conservative. It’s just uhm, I guess they just didn’t see the point of getting it.

SUSAN: uhm hmmm

SCOTT: Because I lived at home and I had my dad’s car that I could drive if I wanted to and this was kind of a luxury item at the time, which, you know, only working part time and spending \$3,000 on a vehicle is kind of a little, I guess not really practical.

SUSAN: To them. I can see what you mean.

SCOTT: That’s just the way I was. But I really grew into it. I grew to like it a lot.

SUSAN: And, did you have other friends who had vehicles like that? Or, did you meet up with folks that did?

SCOTT: Kind of. I had a couple friends who had motorcycles. I think there were 2 other people who bought motorcycles at the exact same time. But, I think that they kind of drifted into their own sub-groups. Like, one of them had a Japanese street bike. He kind of naturally went into that culture. Then I knew someone who had a Honda road bike. And he kind of naturally went into that kind of culture. So I was kind of always by myself with it.

SUSAN: And how long do you have it? Or, do you still have it?

SCOTT: I had it; I took it all the way to Indianapolis with me. I had it up until a year and half ago. Then, it got stolen.

SUSAN: Oh (disappointed)

SCOTT: And then, six month later I ended up buying a new one just because at that point I didn't really care about having a motorcycle or a scooter anymore, it was just more practicality just because I was unemployed. I didn't have a lot of money and I knew the payment on that would be a lot easier than a down payment on a car or payments on a car.

SUSAN: Okay, so it was more transportation for you than luxury or ..

SCOTT: At that point

SUSAN: At that point, okay.

SCOTT: Going back, I really kind of grew into it and loved it. This is when I lived in California. I ended up going to a different college and I really liked having it there because it was really easy to zip around and uhm..I think one of the biggest things I remember, I know it not something, you haven't asked me this, but I think it's important is that I kind of for the longest time felt that I was kind of, I don't know if it's because of this or or if ..I can't talk today.

SUSAN: I just give you leading questions and then you're free to talk about whatever you want, so, yah..

SCOTT: Okay, well I kind of had a lone wolf mentality, going through all the way up from my early to mid-twenties. I don't know if having the scooter was a symptom or the cause of it. But, I've had a vehicle, where you're the only person who can ride it, kind of I guess that separates me a little bit.

SUSAN: You weren't ready for the mini-van at that point?

SCOTT: No, laugh, oh God, no.

SUSAN: I can understand that.

SCOTT: Not even now

SUSAN: Yah, laugh, I understand that.

SCOTT: But, I don't know. Then I met someone and I don't really care. I used to love it. I used love being able to go on long trips. I went on all kinds of different trips and I used to love like the independence that it gave me. And now, I just don't care. I guess it's because I'm older and also because I met someone.

SUSAN: You're coupled.

SCOTT: Who has a car.

SUSAN: Um hmm

SCOTT: I realize how much I love cars and I realize how much easier it is to only pay for half of the gas. So...

SUSAN: I guess both have advantages, especially when you were in a more populated area. Ahh, it's easier to get around and park maybe?

SCOTT: Yah, and I mean, it's fine here. I just don't like it sometimes because people don't know how to drive and infrastructure is horrible.

SUSAN: Uhmm hmhm

SCOTT: I went to UC Davis, so when I lived in Davis I was just able to zip around anywhere in town in ten minutes. It was easy and now just getting around places is just kind of a pain.

SUSAN: So what kind of bike do you have now?

SCOTT: It is a Genuine Buddy 125.

SUSAN: Okay

SCOTT: It's uh, a mean it's technically a scooter but it tops out at like 65 mph and I take it on the highway and all that.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

SCOTT: The same with the, I had a Vespa before then and that one was more powerful. I tried to take that on the freeway a lot.

SUSAN: Uhm hmm

SCOTT: That's why even though I don't think of myself as a...even though I'm not exactly driving a motorcycle, I almost feel like I'm a motorcycle rider just because I've taken it to like San Francisco and Lake Tahoe and stuff like that.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

SCOTT: Stuff like that, stuff like you wouldn't take a scooter.

SUSAN: Uh hmm. So in California, there's a helmet law, correct?

SCOTT: Yah

SUSAN: And here there is not.

SCOTT: Yes

SUSAN: Not now. Apparently, I am told that there was one at one point in time. So how do you feel about wearing a helmet?

SCOTT: Uhmmm, when I moved here I would wear a helmet about 50% of the time for about my first six months here. Then I realized it was stupid (laugh) so I now I wear a helmet all the time.

SUSAN: Was it that you thought, "Now, okay, I have this freedom so I'm going to take advantage of it?" But, then you thought better?

SCOTT: A little bit. But, every time it was, I lived a year in Bloomington, and it was like I can almost justify it, even though it didn't really make sense, logically, I could almost justify. Hey, I'm only going two miles on a residential road, I can get away without wearing a helmet. But here, I don't know. People who drive here are horrible. I mean, I just know that having a helmet drastically decreases your mortality rate in crashes.

SUSAN: Um hmm. Have you ever been in an accident?

SCOTT: Once. It was a silly accident that was kind of half my fault. Uhmm, I was driving up, I've lived all over the place. I spent a year up in Lake Tahoe and it was in the middle of winter. They'd done a good job of plowing the

roads, so I went out. I went out to the grocery store and I could have taken a long way back, but I was lazy. I wanted to go a way that would take five minutes less. I went down a road that was a little bit icy. A car coming the other way down the road kind of went over into the median, and flung a big hunk of snow in my face and it cause me to lose balance and I fell.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

SCOTT: But, nothing really happened. I was just sore and ruined a jacket and a pair of pants.

SUSAN: Okay.

SCOTT: But that's about it.

SUSAN: That's good!

SCOTT: I know. That's the other thing I'm lucky about. It's about 20,000 miles or so that I've rode and no serious accidents.

SUSAN: Right. Right.

SCOTT: That's almost why I want to get out (laugh).

SUSAN: Yah, laugh

SCOTT: As soon as I can cause I feel like I'm due.

SUSAN: Well, and some people get out and go back in later. It all depends.

SCOTT: Um hmm

SUSAN: What other equipment do you make sure to wear, if any, when you go out?

SCOTT: Ahhh, I've been really bad lately because it's been so hot.

SUSAN: Um hmm

SCOTT: It used to be, no matter what, I would always wear a heavy coat and gloves. I'll be lucky now if I wear like shorts and a pullover jacket or something like that. But, um, now we've talked about interviewing for the last few days, I've been thinking about how I probably should just probably start wearing a coat every day no matter what, even if it is 100 degrees outside cause it's not worth the risk.

SUSAN: Well, I know, I spent 11 years in Arizona before I came here. One of my coworkers was, he became a rider. And, I remember another one of my lady friends that I worked with, he's a young guy and she was older, and she was really counseling him and looking at his jacket. They found something that was protective but not quite so hot in that 100 summer.

SCOTT: I did have a motorcycle jacket for the longest time but once I figured out that I really wasn't going to be riding on the highway that much anymore if at all, I decided to sell it. I needed the money. I probably shouldn't have.

SUSAN: A nice thick leather jacket, or something?

SCOTT: No, it was like the kind that street motorcycle riders use.

SUSAN: Okay

SCOTT: That was just like, I don't know what the material is, but heavy duty with the Kevlar shoulders.

SUSAN: Oh yah..

SCOTT: Stuff like that.

SUSAN: Maybe that's what she was talking about with him.

SCOTT: Uh hmm.

SUSAN: And, speaking of accidents, have you ever been close to another one that was worse? Or have you had friends, that you knew of, that sustained something?

SCOTT: The only other friend who had an accident was a long time ago.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

SCOTT: Probably about 7 – 8 years ago. He wasn't hurt that bad. It was entirely his fault, so I didn't really feel too bad about it. (Laugh). It's hard to say if I've almost gotten in accidents because it just seems like there have been so many times where someone has started to get into my lane, or runs a red light and doesn't see me, but... I don't know if I would really call those close accidents just because..

SUSAN: That's just part of it?

SCOTT: That's just part of it.

SUSAN: Okay.

SCOTT: Kind of just takes those incidents with a grain of salt, really.

SUSAN: Yep. Yah, I know when I was talking to someone, she, motorcycle riders seem to be very forgiving because, she, this one woman, realized that people just don't see her.

SCOTT: Um hmm.

SUSAN: And I thought, I try to look out for motorcycle riders, but sometimes if they're in that blind spot, and we're both moving at the same rate, where they stay in your blind spot, it's difficult. You certainly care about their safety. But, she was pretty forgiving. She realized that when the lady, the other driver, looked at her, she was really taken aback.

SCOTT: Yah, I don't think I've ever really gotten very angry too often. I mean there are some instances where I can just because things where people do things egregiously stupid bug me or when people run red lights. Or, I hate when people illegally pass me, like if I'm on a two lane road and they go illegally past. Especially, when the speed limit is 40 mph and I'm going 42, people pass me.

SUSAN: People could be a little more patient...

SCOTT: I think they just probably think they can bully motorcycle riders around a little bit.

SUSAN: Maybe. I have a little SUV and when I drive the speed limit in some places, it just aggravates people. But, especially in a school zone, I'm not going to speed.

SCOTT: Right

SUSAN: People here, I don't think they are aggressive and nasty. I just think they sometimes aren't very smart about the way they drive.

SCOTT: Yes

SUSAN: In Phoenix, ya know, they don't care. They're just downright rude.

SCOTT: I don't know what it is. I can go to Los Angeles and I can feel totally comfortable driving there.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

SCOTT: Because I think the people are aggressive and nasty, but at the same time they know what they're doing.

SUSAN: True
SCOTT: If that makes sense.
SUSAN: And, honest to goodness! I can't believe how much traffic is there. Sometimes in a lot of places you're not going fast enough to really get in a bad accident.
SCOTT: Yah
SUSAN: I guess that's what Phoenix has turned into, something like that. But, I visited Los Angeles and I couldn't believe if I would look out my hotel room at 3 in the morning and there would be a traffic jam.
SCOTT: It happens (laugh).
SUSAN: I think I'd like to live there but just if I was living in Santa Monica and working from my home. That'll never happen. I'll never afford that. (Laugh)
SCOTT: I know (laugh).
SUSAN: So, what about alcohol and taking your bike out? Ever do bar hops in any of these college towns?
SCOTT: Uhhh, yaaahhh, I hate to say it. I've never done anything where I was bad, like I was in horrible shape. But, there's probably been a couple instances where I would have gone, I would have blown over the limit.
SUSAN: We all did.
SCOTT: I knnnnoooooowww. I hate to say it, but it's just part of that life of being in your early twenties and thinking you're invincible.
SUSAN: Uh hmm. And I think that was before these new commercials that are out, the ones that say buzzed driving is drunk driving.
SCOTT: Uh huh
SUSAN: We didn't realize it.
SCOTT: Yah
SUSAN: So, last question, and again, you can interject anything you want.
SCOTT: Yah
SUSAN: Now what major are you?
SCOTT: Biology
SUSAN: You're biology, okay, 'cause I'm a communication major and we talk about culture, and the media. So, just put anything in mind like movies, television shows, commercials, the way cover things on the news relating to motorcycle riding, do you have any opinions? Does anything come to mind?
SCOTT: Well, give me a second. I can probably think of something. Sorry I keep looking out the window. I just kind of turn my head to think.
SUSAN: Umm hmm
SCOTT: Besides the obvious, the pejorative way people think of scooters. I don't know if it's any specific movie or anything, but it just seems like here, it seems like it's um, people who've had their licenses revoked always have to qualify myself by saying, "I drive a scooter but I had to get a motorcycle license for it", or something like that.
SUSAN: Um hmm
SCOTT: Ur, just that nerds drive them. I don't know.

SUSAN: Oh! (laugh) I never noticed that.
 SCOTT: That's the other thing, it's like a nerdy thing to do.
 SUSAN: Okay
 SCOTT: Ummm, I don't know. I'm not really, I mean, I know how other motorcycle groups, you know, the Harley Davidson people and the Japanese bike people, I know the way they're treated. But, I don't really have like any opinions on it, just because it's not the group I'm in.
 SUSAN: Well, now you've opened up a whole new thing for me. Because, a lot of people talk about the Harley Davidson, whether they have to have one, and they want one, or they like 'em. But, now this Japanese bike group.. Now I know that some of my friends prefer Yamaha and Suzuki,
 SCOTT: Yah
 SUSAN: So what's the, is this like a road bike, or a sports bikes?
 SCOTT: Yah, a road bike. They start at 600 CCs and go up. They're the big Japanese bikes. It's, I don't know, I guess there's a group here, that I see from time to time. They have a jacket that says "317 Riders". You might want to look them up.
 SUSAN: Okay, okay, thank you!
 SCOTT: But they're around here. It's just that I think the Harley Davidson kind of skews more older and white.
 SUSAN: With money?
 SCOTT: Yah (not convincingly) that too. I guess the most stereotypical might be like white conservative, but I guess it could also just be regular white middle-aged family people. Where I think that ..
 SUSAN: I can think of 2 right off the bat!
 SCOTT: Giggle, but the people who drive the Japanese bikes I think are a little more, skews younger, and skews more for ethnic. You'll see African-Americans. You'll see Asian people, uhm, women, I think a lot more often, women, than more often on Harleys. I don't know. I think that it seems like the Harley Davidson group might be aging out and then the people who are gonna have the middle aged people of 15 to 20 years from now are probably gonna be getting Kawasakis and Yamahas.
 SUSAN: Okay
 SCOTT: That's my thought.
 SUSAN: That's important and that's interesting, so thank you.
 SCOTT: You're welcome
 SUSAN: Yah, cause I have a whole bunch of guys that I can reach through my groups that are 50 to 60 white and a lot of them are Haley. Some of them aren't.
 SCOTT: Uh huh.
 SUSAN: But, I wonder about where women are going. I have one who really liked her Harley and gravitate to that. But, this woman was probably over 40.
 SCOTT: uh huh
 SUSAN: Although she'd been riding since she was 18.
 SCOTT: I mean, I'm not saying that Harley's are 100 old.

SUSAN: Right! Right, but yah, I think you're right about the general demographic probably skews that way. In terms of looking for opinions from women, especially younger women, maybe the 317 Riders is a good place to look.

SCOTT: The other option is just to come on the first day of class and look in the motorcycle parking section and accost people. (Laugh)

SUSAN: I know! That's what some grad student, researchers, in Pakistan did and got published! (Laugh)

SUSAN: Seriously, this is interesting to me because I have read a prediction that as third world countries come on line in terms of wealth from industry and globalization, it is anticipated that more people will opt to purchase motorcycles. I would like to know how these people can learn how to avoid traumatic brain injury. Let's hope we can get them to buy motorcycles and helmets at the same time.

SCOTT: I think helmets should be mandatory everywhere. I know that there are perfectly decent arguments against helmet laws, but at the same time, I think it's ridiculous to be buzzing around at 60 miles per hour with nothing protecting your brain.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

SCOTT: And, also I think that it would probably be over all, in the long-reaching term, it would be good for our medical system just because it will cut down on fatalities, it will cut down on drastic injuries, so... That's less people spending time in the hospital, less people dying.

SUSAN: That's true according to some Michigan emergency room physicians that did a study. They looked at people came in with and without the helmet. Those without the helmet did cost greater dollars. They needed more rehabilitation. Longer rehabilitation cost more dollars.

SCOTT: Uh huh

SUSAN: Yes, I have many studies that back up your opinion.

SCOTT: I was just kind of thinking while you were talking, would there be any way, even if you can't make a helmet law, just to incentivize wearing a helmet? Like maybe just giving someone a lower insurance rate?

SUSAN: That's a good question. And that's what I am looking for. I am not very inclined to think that I want to change laws. I want to somehow find out what would give people the incentive to wear it.

SCOTT: Uh hmm. I'm just an idea person.

SUSAN: That's why I am talking to you! I need ideas! And, can I ask your age?

SCOTT: 28.

SUSAN: Okay. Well, thank you for your time

SCOTT: You're welcome.

Interview 7: Robert Amundsen

8/16/12

Male age 58

SUSAN: (Read IRB information.) With all that in mind, do I have you approve all of those things?

ROBERT: Yes

SUSAN: Alright then, if you would, start by telling me when you first became interested in motorcycle riding and what might have influenced you to do so.

ROBERT: I first started riding a motorcycle when we lived out in AZ in the middle 60s. I was riding dirt bikes out here. I continued to ride 'em, even after we moved back to IL. And then, broke away for a while. And then, after I graduated high school, and got home from college I got back into it. I turned around and in 1975 I bought my first Kawasaki motorcycle, a KZ400.

SUSAN: Okay

ROBERT: And then I rode that for a few years and basically, wanted to upgrade. I used to ride whenever the weather got warm, in those years, I started riding. I used to ride it to and from work. I put a lot of miles on the motorcycle. Around about 1978, I bought another motorcycle. I got rid of the small one and bought a larger one. I was looking for a little more power. And, basically, riding with a second person, having a larger motorcycle was a lot better, sooo...

SUSAN: Okay, what was the second kind of motorcycle?

ROBERT: Another Kawasaki, a KZ1000

SUSAN: A Kawasaki also, okay

ROBERT: Yup, I loved both the motorcycles. They were very, very good performing and low maintenance. I rode it a lot also. In the two years that I had it, I put over 11,000 miles on it.

SUSAN: Wow!

ROBERT: Which, is a lot of miles on a motorcycle. (note, this was in a cold climate.) So, I used to ride it everywhere. I would ride it up to Wisconsin. I would ride it to work. I mean, in my working around, some of the job sites, I'd be driving on an average maybe 100 to 120 miles a day around Chicago to and from work.

SUSAN: uh hmm

ROBERT: You know, when I would drive out to a job site. It was just you know, a different experience for me. I love motorcycles! It's just a freedom that you, you know, cherish. Then, it was just before I met Carrie (ex-wife), I ended up, the motorcycle was sitting for a while. I had just stopped riding. Work had gotten busy. I started working with a new contractor and I really couldn't drive the motorcycle that much anymore. I basically ended up with a service van from that company, United Electric. So, I stopped riding. I figured, well, the motorcycle sitting, you know, I'll just get rid of it. If I ever want to start riding again, you know, I will. But, after getting

married, there wasn't much time to ride anymore, with the kids and everything. And, then we didn't think anything of it. Basically, too, just starting out you don't have the money to invest in a new motorcycle. Cause, things were tight through most of the years. It wasn't until, oh, how you would say, I had a midlife crisis at 50, I wanted to start ridin' again. Carrie didn't ride my motorcycle once, back in Illinois. But, she wanted to start riding again. So, my son and I, when I turned 50, that following Saturday, we went out motorcycle shopping. I bought my own motorcycle again and I love it. You know, it sat when I got my diagnosis with blood clots in the legs. I got put on the blood thinners. I stopped riding for about 4 years.

SUSAN: Right

ROBERT: Then as the doctor gave me, how you would say, my all clear, the blood clots were gone and everything. He reduced my Coumadin levels. Now I have a normal, functional prescription, I started riding again. And, it's just so much fun. You know, in fact, I started riding heavily again, only because Brandon (only son) wanted to get a motorcycle. We had sat there in the living room one day and discussed with each other about the safety and everything. I said, "You know what, Brandon?" I said, "I can agree with you want to do to save money and everything, but how about going to school?" He said, "School? You mean you don't want me to just take the test?" I said, "No, I'd like for you to really go to school." He said, "Well, that will cost me some money." I said, "I'll help ya pay for it. And, we'll both go." He said, "you've probably already got your license, dad." I said, "We'll BOTH GO." Because, one, if I get the little card, I get an insurance discount. So, I told him that it was beneficial all the way around. And, we had fun! (emphasis) We started out on a Friday night. Went to Friday night class and did the written test and everything. The goofball got 100% on the test.

SUSAN: Oh, laugh

ROBERT: Dad got a 98%. I missed 2 questions. So, he was gloating for the next day on that.

SUSAN: yah

ROBERT: But then when we got on the open course, and the regular driving course, I skunked him.

SUSAN: Oh

ROBERT: Yah, because he'd never ridden a motorcycle, ya know. So, it was like, "How can an old fart like you be able to ride that well when you haven't ridden in years?" I said, "Because you have a certain knack and you understand how the motorcycle moves." We had fun. (emphasis). It ended up that on the next day, when all of us (except Bryan) had passed everything, I was out there and I did the old ears and tongue when he came by because he was still being retested cause he missed the first round. I was sitting on the sideline fluffing a little bit and he goes, "Shut up, dad."

SUSAN: That's a story a bit similar to a guy that I had this morning. He's 47 and he started riding dirt bikes. I think you develop that skill from when you are a child (riding dirt bikes) and it just stays with you.

ROBERT: uh hmm (affirmative)

SUSAN: That's why it probably felt that way?

ROBERT: Well, you learn, you know, the way motorcycle handles, whether it be a small, light dirt bike, or a heavy one. Each one moves differently. Brandon got himself what I call a crotch rocket, because, they're a speed bike. But, the one that he's got, he's a little more comfortable on. Still, it's a fast motorcycle. Uhm, it's a Honda, and he loves it. Aaannnnndddd, he loves that kind of motorcycle, because, I told him, you know, at first, you know, when he was first interested in wanting to ride, and get it, I told him to take my motorcycle. He said, "Oh, I don't want to be seen on an old fart's motorcycle." I said, "Well, Bradon, this looks almost like a Harley Davidson. It's build like one, it sounds like one, but it's not." And, I said to him, "There's a heck of a difference." I said, "Bradon, if you'll remember, we looked at the Indians, the Harley Davidsons, the Hondas and everything and we ended up with this one." I just had a real problem. We looked at an Indian motorcycle and it was, instead of being chain driven, it was shaft drive, like what you have on an automobile. And, it was such a smooth ride. And I loved it. There was no vibration in the motorcycle at all. And, then, we went out and rode a Harley, and chain drive.. and the vibration and everything..but it was a Harley (emphasis). Well, stickers on that were well over twenty thousand dollars.

SUSAN: Wooowwww.

ROBERT: un huh, for a motorcycle. So, I said, "well, ya know, I can't spend it yet Bradon. Let's go look some more. Let's go back over to the Honda dealership. I want to look at some of the Kawasakis or the Suzukis." Because the dealerships out here, the Honda dealership handles Honda, Kawasaki and Suzuki, all in the same showroom. It's really nice for comparing. Well, we went back over to the motorcycle house, it's in a house, and the guy was rolling out this motorcycle from the back room. It just caught my eye. The goes, "Well, you might not want this. It's a chick bike." Because, it had a little small windshield on it and everything. I said, "Well, let's start it up." Well, she had brought it in. She had the dealership take the standard exhaust system off and had it custom-tuned exhaust system put on it because she wanted it to sound like a Harley Davidson, as close as they could get it. And, it does. And it's nice cause when people hear it, they think it's a Harley coming down the road. She took all the emblems off of it, so you can't tell that it is a Suzuki. And, when you see it, it looks like a Harley Softail (Soft tail?) and it's build like it. It's got the V twin engines, like a Harley does, which is really great and it's got a lot of power and it runs nice. So, we were looking at it and everything and I'm thinking that this is a twelve – fifteen thousand dollar motorcycle. It was \$6,000. Sold instantly. And, I went like this (arms in air

like a scale, one high and one low) twenty thousand dollars..six thousand dollars.

SUSAN: Yah. Did you have the windshield changed?

ROBERT: No, cuz it was a shaft drive. There's no vibration when you ride. (He didn't hear me correctly, but I didn't stop him because it wasn't that important a point.) Carrie and I the first time we got it, we took a ride from our house here all the way up to Payson and back.

SUSAN: Wow.

ROBERT: She did, her butt was a little sore because she's got no butt cheeks. But, she loved it. Not a problem with the ride at all. That's an hour and some odd minutes, just to Payson.

SUSAN: Yah, I know. Sounds nice.

ROBERT: Yep

SUSAN: I mean, I wouldn't want to do it, but I can see why that would be a beautiful drive.

ROBERT: Yes

SUSAN: So, tell me about what you do for safety when you are riding your bike.

ROBERT: I have always been a person that, if I put the motorcycle down, I don't want to end up like one of these people that are wearing shorts, gym shoes, and no helmet on, and everything, I have always ridden with a helmet, back in IL, and even here, they are both no helmet states, I never rode without a helmet. I've seen a couple of my friends get a rock in the face and put the motorcycle down. It's ugly. I just never wanted that. I didn't want to be, I've seen motorcycle wrecks, the people coming out of them, being vegetables. My neighbor across the street, Rick, he had a real nice Harley Davison. I was out in the front yard one day, doing some yard work. He grabbed his motorcycle, left. He was in shorts, gym shoes and a t-shirt, and he never came home.

SUSAN: Oh, no..

ROBERT: Yah. So, it was just an act of stupidity. And you know, he got killed. And it was very sad. And, you know, had he had the helmet on, and protective wear, at least a long sleeve shirt or a denim jacket... I ride, even on hot days, I ride with a long sleeved shirt. And, very, very seldom, there's been a few times when I've ridden with a short sleeved shirt. But, I have heavy blue jeans. The boots that I have are tall, leather boots. The leather boot comes up my calf. It's just good protection and that's what I ride with. Gloves. I do not ride without gloves (emphasis). I have riding gloves. You know, people go like, "Oh, they cost like, you know, \$40 or \$50 for a decent pair of riding gloves." I say, "hmmm, motorcycle falls down, what's the first thing you that look for to stop yourself?"

SUSAN: Yah

ROBERT: If you've got gloves on, your gonna have that protection to keep your skin from getting' torn off. You just take those extra precautions. And, then you learn how to watch out (emphasis) for the other person.

SUSAN: um hmm

ROBERT: People don't see motorcycles. I took the added extra effort, instead of having a single light on the motorcycle, I have what they call a triple tree. They are high intensity head lights that are on the front end so people can see me and know I'm comin'.

SUSAN: Okay

Robert: And, I don't ride with them off, ever. Whenever the motorcycle is runnin' those lights are on.

SUSAN: Okay. So, um, did they teach you this also, well, you knew that already, but when you went to that class with Bradon, did they talk about that?

ROBERT: They talk a lot about safety and the types of helmets that you should be wearing. Some of these people that ride, you see them with the little half helmet that look just like a hat..

SUSAN: Yah

ROBERT: That is okay to a certain extent. It protects the top of your head. But, what about the rest of your head and face?

SUSAN: Yah

ROBERT: I wear a full helmet. To me, that's the safer way to be, because you need to protect the back end of your head as well as the top of your head. And yah, people wear those shortie helmets and everything else like that because they don't want to look ugly. Well, I don't care if you can't see my face. I wear a shaded shield during the day with sunglasses.

SUSAN: uh huh

ROBERT: And, in the evening I have a clear shield. And I wear glasses. These glasses are plastic safety. So, even if I had the shield up for a short distance, if a rock hit me in the face, I don't have to worry about my glasses getting shattered.

SUSAN: uh huh

ROBERT: And, a perfect example is about a month ago Brandon got hit by a rock and it shattered his face shield. Imagine what it would have been like if he didn't have that helmet on and no face shield and just glasses. Because, you see so many people around here, Susan, and you probably have, riding a motorcycle with just sunglasses and a bandana on going down the road.

SUSAN: Here too. Indiana doesn't have a helmet law anymore either.

ROBERT: And it's people taking their own life not seriously.

SUSAN: Yah

ROBERT: I want to be getting to ride my motorcycle till I'm old and can't drive it anymore.

SUSAN: Yah. So, do you ride with any groups around there?

ROBERT: I ride with a couple of friends. You know, I've gone on some group rides. Everybody tried to get to a certain place too fast. It's not fun. I've got a couple of friends I ride with, you know, we'll just decide on a Sunday morning, and take a ride out to the lake, say, go and have breakfast.

SUSAN: uh huh

ROBERT: I took a ride like about a month ago to California, to Riverside. There was an old friend from high school there. She said, "Why don't you stop on by?" I went out to visit her and then came back. That was a long ride, five

hours, one way. You know, going 75 or 80 miles on the motorcycle, it gets exhausting after a while. I won't do that again for a while. I short, two hour, ride, to like Payson and kind of like that, is the limit of my endurance right now.

SUSAN: Well, and also it's just so, I mean, Payson, where you can get up where it's a little cooler. But, right now, California is hot.

ROBERT: Oh yah! And going through that desert, the average day, I drove it early in the morning,

SUSAN: uh huh

ROBERT: I left the house at 5:30 and I was in Riverside, at right around 10:30. The heat of the day hadn't hit. And then when I came home, I came home late in the evening. I left Riverside at about 5:30 in the afternoon and caught the evening cool after the sun had gone down.

SUSAN: uh huh

ROBERT: It's just that it's a different experience riding at night too, because of the truck traffic. It's a hard thing too when you're on an interstate like that, I wish I would have been on back country roads, because, when those trucks come by you, or when you go by a truck, you basically get pulled into it. And that's a scary feeling. So, like the ride home took a little bit longer only because it was dark out and I had to be a lot more cautious.

SUSAN: Yah, trucks would scare me too. This is what they call the crossroads of America here. We have tons of huge semis going all the different highways. I certainly wouldn't want to be on a motorcycle.

ROBERT: No

SUSAN: So, it's just a couple friends that go at the same pace as you, that's who you like to go with?

ROBERT: Yep

SUSAN: Okay. Okay. Well, anything else you want to tell me about your motorcycle experience? How about, do you ever think about them, or notice how motorcycle riders are portrayed in the media, whether it's the news or whether it's a movie or a tv show you're watching?

ROBERT: Uhm, I look at people riding motorcycles. Motorcycle people from years ago, it's tremendously changed because there's so much more "pleasure motorcycling" out there. There's a lot more people out buying motorcycles for pleasure. A lot of people have bought Harley Davidsons only for the mystique of riding a Harley Davidson. Uhm, they've been up to Sturgis to see all that. And, a lot of the motorcycle groups and gangs that hang around there, they're not as notorious as they used to be. There's still there, you still see 'em, you still hear about 'em. But, I think the whole aspect of outlook towards motorcycles has changed because there's a lot more people riding them. I mean, you see Harley Davidson dealers poppin' up all over the place. You know, and it's not just one.

SUSAN: Sure do.

ROBERT: It's not just one or two. I mean, here in Phoenix right now we have almost 15. There's another one under construction right now, a Harley Davidson dealership. Three in Mesa

SUSAN: I bet we have seven or eight. Did you say three in just Mesa?

ROBERT: Yah, we have Chosa's that's been there for a long time. You have Rick's Harley Davidson that's just on the outskirts or South Mesa. Then you have new one that's right on, well, that might even be Apache Junction there. But, it's right on the borderline of Apache Junction and Mesa.

SUSAN: Okay. Wow. There's a lot here too. Actually, there is one in my town because it's near I-70. One of the major expressways.

ROBERT: There's one in Chandler now. They've got two of them now in Scottsdale. One is by, there's a Harley Davidson dealership now by Scottsdale Shea Hospital in the shopping center that's just down, I think it's 94th Street there.

SUSAN: Oh, oh yah

ROBERT: There's a Harley Davidson deal that's there and there's one in Scottsdale, then there's one in Glendale, there's one in Peoria. I mean, they've popped up all over the place.

SUSAN: Yah. They seem to have become very popular.

ROBERT: There's people wanting to get out and ride because it's just, it's fun to ride.

SUSAN: It is. And, you're in a climate where you can make the most of your investment, most of the time.

ROBERT: Oh yah. I started riding in early April. You know, when we completed the school and everything. But, there have been times before I stopped riding, I would start riding in February or March, as soon as it got comfortably warm during the day and I rode all the way until October November. You know, you can even ride in December. It's like you can almost ride year round here except, there's been a few times in like January or February when the weather didn't get above 60. But, you throw a coat on and it's comfortable riding. Get out and go for ride with, you know, a leather coat on and be comfortable.

SUSAN: Yah, as long as it's not snowing or raining. Why not? Going back to what you told me about when you were younger and in Chicago area, and you were going to different job sites, did you have the tools at the job site, or did you have to take them with you on your motorcycle?

ROBERT: I had them. We used to leave them in the gang box on the job site. I would initially start at the job site. When I knew I wanted to ride, I would leave them there, locked up in the gang box the night before. I would just ride to the job site the following day. If I had to inadvertently take my tools with me, I always had saddlebags, so it was never a problem.

SUSAN: Okay

ROBERT: It was never a problem. My tools always fit in the saddlebags. They were always large enough.

SUSAN: Okay, I wondered. Because, that might be a lot of packing and moving around.

ROBERT: No, I always used to carry my riding boots, and work boots. In other words, my work boots were just a short work boot, leather boots, steel-

toes that I had to have. I'd keep in the saddle bag. But I would always ride with a high leather boot to protect myself.

SUSAN: Right

ROBERT: Always rode that way, so I'd always have an extra pair or some boots. I'd either have my regular riding boot or my work boots in the saddlebags.

SUSAN: Alright. You were prepared for anything.

ROBERT: Yep, and I always have rain gear in the saddlebags. Because, if you're riding, you never know when you're gonna run up on a rain storm.

SUSAN: Yup, what about, last question. I'm thinking, I'm rewinding to when you were doing this in your younger days, and more socializing, I was just talking to you about getting back and forth to work. But, what about when you were riding, would you go out to the bars on your motorcycle.

ROBERT: Never

SUSAN: Okay

ROBERT: Never did that. You know, that's the thing that I've carried with me. If I'm riding or driving, I don't drink, Susan. I never have. You know, and that's just one of the things I practice. You know, and, I got that way only because early on, I had a couple of friends get killed in car accidents, not in motorcycle accidents, but in car accidents, just from drunk driving. And I had a good friend of mine, he was drunk, and he hit a motorcycle. You know, it was just one of those things that, you know, and when you've got kids, you know, that was one of the things. When we'd go out to a restaurant, you know, just to socialize or something like that, and we had the kids with us, I'd always be the one, I would let Carrie drink and me not.

SUSAN: uh hmm

ROBERT: You know, I was just that way. Even when ah, you know, we'd go and meet friends and take the motorcycle, ya know, we'd be at a place, ya know, and "Aww, just have a beer." "Nope!" That's not me.

SUSAN: Yah, can't blame ya.

ROBERT: Too many liabilities. Too many risks. And, it's like, I don't want to be another statistics.

SUSAN: And, you were very close to people who had the terrible accident.

ROBERT: Yes

SUSAN: So, at an early age, you really saw what it was like afterwards.

ROBERT: You see the consequences or stupid actions. It really makes you think about it. I lost, because of alcohol, in a period of three years, I lost six real good friends. They were all in alcohol related accidents, behind the wheel.

SUSAN: I remember, and this reminded me, because some of the kids in the class that I am observing right now, has one kid who wants to lower the drinking age to 18. I remember when I was between 18 and 21 Illinois was 19 for drinking. It was right before I turned 21, like 4 months before, that they changed it to 21. I know of a lot kids from our town who would drive to Wisconsin because the legal drinking age was 18 there. There were some terrible car crashes..and deaths because of that very thing.

ROBERT: Yep. One of the stupid things I did, and then I stopped it, we used to be at the race track just about every weekend. We would run our cars from right there in Union Grove (WI), there is one bar called Auggie's. After the races we would go hang out and Auggie's and listen to the band. We had been in there and had been drinking. We used to challenge each other to see how fast we could make it back to Fox River Grove (IL. At the intersection of Rt. 14 and Rt. 22 there was an all-night diner called The Fifth Wheel Restaurant. We used to make it back there around two or three o'clock in the morning and have breakfast there. There was one time we made it from Union Grove WI to that intersection in 57 minutes and we were drunk.

SUSAN: Oh, yah

ROBERT: So, I think about that and we talk about that and wonder, "how, the hell, are you still alive?" You know, you think of the stupid things that you do. And, you take a different outlook in life when people around you start getting killed. And then, later on, like now you know, I would never change my safety habits on the motorcycle because I have a beautiful granddaughter right now. I want to see her grown up. I try not to do stupid things. Is that what it means? You know, when the motorcycle was sitting, I used to run it every now and then. I'd start it up in the garage and everything. And, I'll admit to it, backed it out of the garage and took it around the block. I'd get back and Carrie would be standing in the garage with her arms folded. She's say, "Where the f*#@ is your sense?" I didn't put a helmet on. (But he was on Coumadin and wasn't supposed to be riding a motorcycle.) People don't think it is necessary to put a helmet on when they are just going around the block. But, a little girl, right around the corner, about 5 years ago, got killed by a man coming around the corner as she went running into the street. You know, something could happen that fast and that's stupid.

SUSAN: Right. Yah, every once in a while we have that little lapse in judgment.

ROBERT: Yup.

SUSAN: But, we all do it.

ROBERT: Yup

SUSAN: Well, thank you very much for your time and your insight, because, I'm getting a lot of good information.

ROBERT: You're welcome.

Interview 7: Justin Thomas

8/15/12

Male, age 52

SUSAN: Read IRB requirements:
SUSAN: Do I have your permission to proceed?
JUSTIN: Yes:
SUSAN: I start out by asking the riders to tell me how long they have been riding and what influenced them to become motorcycle riders.
JUSTIN: I started when I was probably about 17. I'm 52 now. Just sumpin' I always wanted to do and I bought my Harley.
SUSAN: Did you start out with Harley?
JUSTIN: No, I started out with Hondas and all that, Yamahas. 4 years ago I bought 2 Harleys.
SUSAN: Is that for each of you?
JUSTIN: No, They're both mine. I put them together. I got one that's runnin' now. I rebuilt it, got it running. The other one I'm starting to work on the paint and all that. When I get it running I'm gonna put that in the memory of my dad.
SUSAN: How nice. Did your dad have anything to do with influencing you to be a motorcycle rider when you were younger?
JUSTIN: He didn't really have a motorcycle. He always wanted one, but he never got one before he passed away. So, I'm gonna do the other one up in memory to him.
SUSAN: Oh, nice.
JUSTIN: Yah
SUSAN: So, you can work with your hands, and engines and things too?
JUSTIN: Yah
SUSAN: Are engines a hobby besides the motorcycle or is it just that you work on motorcycles?
JUSTIN: I just work on 'em. If it gets too technical, I'll take it to the shop.
SUSAN: Oh, okay.
JUSTIN: I don't get down into the insides.
SUSAN: Oh, okay, so you do the like the body work and nice finish and everything?
JUSTIN: Yup
SUSAN: So, why Harleys?
JUSTIN: I don't know. I've always wanted a Harley, so I would up with a Harley.
SUSAN: Yah, and you've had other ones too, so you've worked your way into this.
JUSTIN: Yah
SUSAN: Who did you start riding with? Are you someone who is a loner, or do you ride with groups?
JUSTIN: I ride by myself. The type of work I'm into, construction, a few guys there have Harleys. We might go on bike ride.
SUSAN: So, you're friends from work?
JUSTIN: Yah

SUSAN: I didn't know what you did when you said you were working 12 hours and when you got off at 8pm.

JUSTIN: Yah, I'm a construction worker.

SUSAN: So do you live in EG?

JUSTIN: No, I live in Sheldon.

SUSAN: Where's that compared to EG?

JUSTIN: Northwest of that. I'm 60 miles north of Sioux City.

SUSAN: Oh, okay. We used to make that drive when I was a little kid from Chicago to EG.

JUSTIN: Yup

SUSAN: So, what do you wear to protection or safety when you are riding a motorcycle?

JUSTIN: I just wear the helmet in the states where it is required. Other than that, I just wear boots and long pants and like a tank top, and go out and ride.

SUSAN: Is Iowa a state with a helmet law?

JUSTIN: No, Iowa ain't got the helmet law.

SUSAN: Oh, okay. I'm in Indiana right now and Indiana doesn't either, and I guess, Illinois doesn't.

JUSTIN: No, Illinois don't .

SUSAN: But you choose to wear the helmet?

JUSTIN: No, I have to wear it down here in Missouri right now because it's the law.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

JUSTIN: Yah, I gotta helmet.

SUSAN: So, when you're in a state where it isn't a law, how do you feel about wearing it? Can you just not wait to get it off or what?

JUSTIN: I strap it on the bike, or whatever.

SUSAN: Okay

JUSTIN: I don't wear 'em. Basically, I don't like wearing them.

SUSAN: What is it about it that you don't like?

JUSTIN: It's just, I don't know, to me it just feels like, ah, it's just an extra item that's burning me up and it's hot.

SUSAN: Yes, I guess especially in summer it can be pretty uncomfortable.

JUSTIN: Yah

SUSAN: What about, do you have a windshield on your bike?

JUSTIN: No

SUSAN: Oh, I'd wondered if there is anything about the aerodynamics and the way the wind hits the helmet, if that is distracting.

JUSTIN: No, I've got little vents in mine where the air can pull through, but it just feels like it's drawing all the heat in there.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

JUSTIN: I don't have a full face, I've got a half helmet.

SUSAN: Okay, so it's just as much protection as you need without having a whole lot on your head?

JUSTIN: Yah

SUSAN: I'm learning more about helmets. I'm not a rider myself, but I'm just curious what makes people want to wear them or not want to wear them.

JUSTIN: Some people, they'd rather wear them for protection, but me, I'm just the type that will wear them in the states that require 'em. I just don't like it on the top of my head.

SUSAN: Okay. Have you ever been in an accident yourself?

JUSTIN: Nope

SUSAN: Nope?

JUSTIN: Nope

SUSAN: Boy, you've been riding a long time! So you really pay good attention.

JUSTIN: Yah, I watch out for everybody else. 'Cause I know they ain't watching out for me.

SUSAN: That's what they say.

JUSTIN: I had one, right there in Sheldon, I was coming up the road, I was like 20 feet from the intersection. He didn't even stop at the stop sign and made a left turn right in from of me.

SUSAN: Eweeee

JUSTIN: Yah, and I had the granddaughter on behind me.

SUSAN: Oh my!

JUSTIN: Yah, 10 year old granddaughter.

SUSAN: That's scary

JUSTIN: Well, it was that day.

SUSAN: And, I've interviewed a few people so far and I've heard that story about people turning left in front of motorcycle riders, a handful of times now. I think that, I don't know, If it's too hard to see, or they just think that they can make it before you get there. I don't know why they would do that.

JUSTIN: I don't know. By the time he got around the corner I was right at the back door of his car. I laid on the horn. I ain't got no baffles in my thing, so I know he heard it when I pulled the clutch in and hit the gas a couple times.

SUSAN: Wow. That was a lucky one... So, my other question that I am asking people is, if you can think of the way motorcycles riders are portrayed in the media, whether it's in movies or television now, of the way the news casters cover a story about a motorcycle rider, do you have any thoughts about that? Does anything come to mind?

JUSTIN: Not really. They do their job. It's, I don't know, how do I want to put this? A lot of us go on these poker runs, they drink and that. The media gets wind of that and it gets all twisted out of shape.

SUSAN: Because the newscasters know that there might be, one of the stops might be a bar?

JUSTIN: Well, that's where the poker cards are, in bars. And, they think you go in a bar and it's all drink and that. It gets all blown out of proportion.

SUSAN: Okay

JUSTIN: I ain't saying that some of 'em don't drink, cause, ya know, not everybody can drink.

SUSAN: But when there is even a hint that alcohol might be involved, the newscasters sensationalize it?

JUSTIN: Yah, with stories. You got a poker run to benefit this and that, it's in a bar.

SUSAN: What's it like when you get to one of the stops? Do they have coffee if you want coffee too?

JUSTIN: I usually buy a soda. I don't drink.

SUSAN: um hmm. Okay, so you can get a soft drink easily...

JUSTIN: Yah. I might have had a drink when I was younger. I never had an accident, I just always have thought that alcohol and riding don't mix.

SUSAN: Yah, that's smart. I think when we are real young, if we pay attention, there is something tells us that something isn't smart and that we should just stay away from it.

JUSTIN: When I was in my 20s I might ride my bike to a bar, but if I had too much to drink, my bike would stay parked. I've even give the keys to the bar owner.

SUSAN: Very good!

JUSTIN: It's your own judgment.

SUSAN: Yep. I think that some of the older riders I am talking with, and I am 54, so I am not calling you old. Most of my group, you know, they're in the 50ish range, or early 60s. Even some in their late 20s and early 30s they admit to doing something stupid when they were 21. It turned them around pretty quickly, fortunately.

JUSTIN: Yah

SUSAN: Anything else you'd like to share about motorcycle riding?

JUSTIN: Just use your common sense.

SUSAN: Yes

JUSTIN: That's about all I have.

SUSAN: Well, sounds like it's working for you. I don't want to take up too much of your time. I know you've been working hard all day. I really do appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

JUSTIN: You're welcome.

Interview 9: Dave Parker Interview

Via Phone 8/18/12

Male, age 60, professional, married, parent of adult children

SUSAN: After reading IRB requirements: do I have your permission to continue with the interview?

DAVE: Yes, okay.

SUSAN: So, I guess I'd love to find out first, what it was that got you interested in motorcycle riding.

DAVE: Basically, for me it was mostly friends that ah, that were riding. And uh, I just wanted to join them. I rode a little with them, and then I wanted to ride. That's it, really.

SUSAN: So, about what age was this?

DAVE: When I started that, it was probably I'd say I was probably 48 years old.

SUSAN: And, so, was it your close friends, or people in the neighborhood??

Lost connection, called back.

SUSAN: You were telling me that you were about 48, you had friends who were riders and that is what influenced you to start riding.

DAVE: Yes, exactly

SUSAN: That sounds like fun. So, where did you start? Was it forest preserves, or highway or, how did that work?

DAVE: Ah, mostly, no, yah, mostly back roads. I started slowly and then just got to where I was more comfortable. And, then was able to get on the highway. It was mostly back roads, country roads, through like, just West of us in ya know, Rockford, Rockford, Illinois, out towards that direction. Country roads.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: Then you just get more comfortable where you are able to ride on the highway and everything, which I am right now.

SUSAN: Okay. Pause. When you are out riding, do you go riding with these friends, are you a loner, do you belong to a big group?

DAVE: Ah, the group is probably at its maximum, it's probably 5 motorcycles. Usually, myself, I usually never go out alone. The only time, I am sure you will interview some people that will ride alone a lot. A lot of guys ride on their way to work and everything. I am in construction, so I can't do that.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

DAVE: So, I basically don't ride unless there's someone else riding with me.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: At least another motorcycle.

SUSAN: Okay. And, do you ever do these charity events where there is a whole bunch of people and they go to different stops?

DAVE: We try, we try, we try reeeeeeaaally not do that. Um, I think it's a great cause, to do that. But, the people I ride with aren't real comfortable with that because there are so many motorcycles and you're riding so close to

other people that you don't know, it could be, we just think it's a little dangerous.

SUSAN:

Okay

DAVE:

There's too many bikes too close together, uh, one guy misses a gear and it becomes this big accordion effect. You know what I mean?

SUSAN:

Oh yah.

DAVE:

Okay. Honestly, I've been on some. They are a lot of fun. But they can be, we think they're too dangerous for us to participate in. So, we usually do not do that. And. Like I said, it's usually two to three bikes, maybe five, when we ride.

SUSAN:

Okay. So, speaking of safety, tell me about what you do to protect yourself when you're riding.

DAVE:

Uhhmm, most of the time, we'll wear our helmets when we know when we will be traveling, like an all-day ride. Highway riding, we'll wear our helmets for sure. Umm, as far as the drivers go, we've always got our gloves on. And, we usually wear jackets that have the padding in 'em. And that's as far as safety goes, we just took a trip down to St. Louis. I made sure I had on, it wasn't a vest, but like a very illuminant, like the green illuminant shirt, for safety. My brake light on my motorcycle flashes every time when I hit my brakes. That's another safety feature, just so people can see me when I'm braking.

SUSAN:

Okay. And, what kind of things do you wear like below the knees? Do you ever go out in shorts?

DAVE:

Never.

SUSAN:

Okay

DAVE:

Never. It is always long pants and boots.

SUSAN:

Okay

DAVE:

For us. I will go. I won't even wear my gym shoes. It's boots and long pants. I will go short sleeved once in a while, but that's only if I know that it's going to be a real short ride. Otherwise, it's usually the padding that is in the jacket, like the elbows, shoulders, backs have padding.

SUSAN:

Yah, I'm learning more about those as I am talking with people. They sound pretty neat.

DAVE:

yah, they are neat. It's a little uncomfortable for me. I'll be honest, because I'm like hot blooded. So, when the sun comes down on those jackets, it kind of beats on those pads. It's a little uncomfortable. But, I guess in the long run, it's better off doing that than not having it on.

SUSAN:

Yah, having bad timing. That wouldn't be good.

DAVE:

No, not at all.

SUSAN:

So, now I know that you and I both live in a state where there is no helmet law, and you said that when you are going on a long trip, even if there is no law, that you are wearing the helmet anyway.

DAVE:

Correct, yes.

SUSAN:

Is there ever a time that you don't wear the helmet, and how do you decide that?

DAVE: Uhm, I won't wear it if I'm just drivin' around in the neighborhood. But, ya know, if I hop on the bike and I just drive around the neighborhood a little bit, it's kind of a honestly, a hit or miss thing. It's kind how I feel. Uhm, even though we're not, I mean we don't have to wear it. I'm probably 50%, 50/50 when we ride comfortable with it and comfortable without it. If we're going on a long trip, it's definite that the helmet is going on. If it's gonna be a short ride, like on a Sunday morning, maybe 30 minutes, 40 minutes to go get some breakfast, I might not wear it.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: Which, which probably is not a good philosophy, but, anything can happen and it usually, statistics show that it happens like a mile within your home.

SUSAN: Yah

DAVE: So, but for me it's just pretty much just how I feel in the morning, so.

SUSAN: Okay, that's what I'm lookin' for, Dave. I don't want you to tell me what you know, some people think you should say. I just wanna know honestly what you're thinking and how you make a decision.

DAVE: Yah, and that's the truth. It kind depends on how I feel when I'm ready to roll that morning. Like I said, sometimes I'll go down the block two miles to 7 Eleven and I'll put it on.

SUSAN: Yah

DAVE: It's just, it's just uh, how I feel at that point.

SUSAN: Okay. You said that you became when you were in your late 40s. Can you tell me about the process of shopping for your motorcycle and purchasing it? And, what type you have?

DAVE: Yes. I actually, at that point, just a little history, a program where you went to school for X amount of hours and they taught you how to ride..

SUSAN: Uh hmm,

DAVE: And, after I passed that course, if you pass that course, you automatically get your license and that's what happened. So, I started small. I started with like an 800 CC smaller bike, just to get back into the swing of things. I kept that bike probably for like two years. And then, I graduated up to like an 1100 CC Yamaha. That's what I have right. That's why I've been riding for the last X amount of years, the last bike that I purchased.

SUSAN: Okay. Did you buy that at a dealer or from a private party?

DAVE: I bought that one used from a private guy. He had just gotten married and had a baby. While his buddies, just like our little group, his little group, everybody started having little kids.

SUSAN: Yup

DAVE: They were getting rid of their bikes. I'm on the other end of the spectrum. I'm older than them. My kids are older. So, it was a good time for me.

SUSAN: Time to pick up a new hobby, and another even nice bike.

DAVE: Yah, time to pick up a nice bike and to pick it up for cheap.

SUSAN: Yah, good deal. Good deal for everybody, all the way around.

DAVE: Absolutely it is.

SUSAN: So, uhm, the other question I'm asking everyone is, if you can think of how motorcycle riders are portrayed in the media, whether it be in movies or television shows, or how they talk about it on newscasts, do you have any opinions about that?

DAVE: I do. And I totally think like now, the whole motorcycle rider thing has changed from, I don't know how many years ago when, ten years ago, when everybody who ride a motorcycle was, ya know, like a gangster type.

SUSAN: Uh huh

DAVE: I don't want to say low life. But, nowadays, I don't see that anymore. Anybody can ride a motorcycle. Anybody can ride together. It' uh, and I see a lot more community things. I see signs everywhere, start seeing motorcycles everywhere. They're posted everywhere. So, I think the look that was you know, the way motorcycles were portrayed, motorcycle riders were portrayed twenty years ago has totally changed. Now it's your everyday Joe. You see guys in suits on motorcycles.

SUSAN: Yep

DAVE: Ya know? So, I believe it has changed and I think that's a good thing. Because, I don't think, back in the day, maybe it was bad and like that. But, it's not like that now, ya know.

SUSAN: Yah

DAVE: It's just a bunch of people that want to be on two wheels and not four. And, have a good time and everybody is okay with that. Now, I think that, the pendulum has swung. You don't have the motorcycle gang thing. That's what it was always about. It's not like that anymore.

SUSAN: I agree. I guess I used to think, maybe there was some criminal activity involved, or they were very intimidating when I was much younger. But, now I see more of these rides for good and people that just like to be out closer to nature.

DAVE: Yah, I mean, a lot of the guys still do look intimidating. Honestly, if you know them, and meet them, they're, I'm sure there still are that group, that group is still there.

SUSAN: Uhm hmm.

DAVE: But, on the, for the majority, I don't think so. I think it's just about, the whole thing is just about getting' out, and ridin' and having a good time, and being safe. That's the whole thing.

SUSAN: Right. Right. Uhm, I noticed that, looking at this demographic, it seems that the older folks tend to gravitate towards the Harleys. Do you think that is the case? Or, do you see different cliques or groups?

DAVE: No, I would totally agree with that. That is uhm, that is the big name for a motorcycle riding community. The Harley is the biggest name there is out there. They uhm, there name wasn't that good before because they didn't produce a good machine.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DAVE: Now they do. And it's American maaa, well. We'll say, "Quote, it's American made", and that's the whole thing right now. I ride a Yamaha, basically because I couldn't afford to buy a Harley.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DAVE: Ya know, I won't spend that kind of money when I can buy a machine, you know, at one quarter of the price of a Harley. That's it basically. And, I know that my machine will run forever, with the proper maintenance.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DAVE: But, ya know, most people do swing towards the Harley. It's just that that's the name that is motorcycling. Harley is the name.

SUSAN: I'm so curious about it because I know there the quote, American made factor, which is important. And, it might be a very good product. But, I also know, I've heard now about Sturgis and the community that revolves around Harley, and I wonder if it isn't the effort put into, you know, creating events and things that people enjoy going to.

DAVE: Uh, it's anything like that. It's the events. It's the, I mean, it's the merchandise too. I mean I wish I had Harley so I could purchase the Harley merchandise to wear because everything they have is beautiful. They have so much nice stuff. I mean, I can buy Yamaha stuff, but Harley has sooo much stuff, that it's just, the major thing in motorcycling is how you look. You have all the apparel on and everything is Harley. I mean, when you see Harley guy or girl, I mean, everything they have on says Harley on it.

SUSAN: Uhm hmm

DAVE: Ya know. Uhm, when we ride on my Yamaha, you know, I got a couple T-shirts that say Yamaha and that's it.

SUSAN: Uh huh

DAVE: And you can't ride a Yamaha with a Harley jacket on. Ya know?

SUSAN: Yah, I guess not.

DAVE: No..It's just not right!

SUSAN: giggle

DAVE: giggle

DAVE: And if you'd see the Harley guys, they'll tell you that it's not right.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: So, but..

SUSAN: Well, their dealerships are everywhere. So, now that you told me that, I'm gonna have to go in and look and see what they have.

DAVE: Oh, it's fantastic. It's unbelievable. Everything they have is beautiful. Uh, it's expensive, but beautiful.

SUSAN: Uh huh, okay.

DAVE: You know how it is. It's unbelievable. Where you're not going to find that in your smaller shops, your Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, you're not going to find that because it's not as big as the Harley dealership.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: That's the one down side. You know, I wish I had a Harley because then I could buy all the Harley stuff.

SUSAN: Right.

DAVE: But, I'm happy with my generic Joe Blow jacket and everything else is fine.

SUSAN: Well, that's good!

DAVE: Yep

SUSAN: Well, is there anything else that you can think of that you can think of? 'Cause this is, you know, free form... You can share any thoughts that you have about motorcycles, motorcyclers, or riding.

DAVE: Not really. I mean you really covered everything. I'd just like to emphasize that it's not like it used to be. It's not like when you ride you're in some gang. Well, to be honest, we are our little gang. We are our little group of five or six riders, so I guess we are our little gang.

SUSAN: Are these all guys in the group?

DAVE: No, no, the ladies ride with us. No, most of the time the ladies go with us on the back. And, that's what's fun about it. That's what makes it enjoyable. That you can go out for a weekend trip with the girls and they're happy riding on the back. So, we are our little gang. You understand what I mean?

SUSAN: Yah

DAVE: You're not associated with the drugs and the crime and everything like that. But, it's just not the same anymore. I think everybody realizes that. You see your old time Harley guys, you know with their long hair and the beards. But, those guys are super nice, great guys. They're just regular people.

SUSAN: Yup

DAVE: Uhm, we just look different than they do. That's probably all that I need to add. That, you know, it's just a great pastime that we enjoy. We don't have a problem stopping at place where all the Harley people stop, to have lunch. They don't bother us.

SUSAN: Okay

DAVE: It's not like that anymore, like you'd see on Wild Hogs, the movie.

SUSAN: I know. I've seen that!

DAVE: You know, where the four guys go in. That's like us. If we go out, like us four guys, we go out, you know, we see a bunch of bikes, we stop. We're not expecting to get in a bunch of trouble. We just want to go in and have a burger and a beer and you know...

SUSAN: Uh huh.

DAVE: Hang out with the guys. I'm sure there's place like that, but you don't see that. I'm sure it's few and far in between (meaning the hostile, hard core riders depicted in the movie).

SUSAN: Right

DAVE: It's just about, my bottom line, it's all about ridin'

DAVE: Okay

DAVE: That's all I want to do. I just wanna ride.

SUSAN: I have a persona question. Are you in the 50 to 60 demographic?

DAVE: Yes

SUSAN: Okay. Cause, I'm trying to get different groups. I do have a lot of my over 50 crowd. And then I have my 20-somethings that I find at school. I'm just trying to get as many people as I can in certain groups,. So, thank you for that information.

DAVE: Yah. No problem at all.

SUSAN: I think I will let you go back to enjoy your beautiful Michigan day. I appreciate your wanting to give me this time. It's very helpful!

DAVE: Okay, absolutely. If you need any other information, just let me know. Send me an email or something.

Interview 10: Raina Andrews
 (8/22/12)
 Female, Age 43

SUSAN: Read the IRB disclosures. With that in mind, do I have your permission to proceed?

RAINA: Yes

SUSAN: Ok, can you hear me?

RAINA: Yes, am I coming through clear for you?

SUSAN: You sound wonderful. Thank you very much.

RAINA: Okay

SUSAN: So, my first question is, if you could just share with me how you came to be a motorcycle rider, when you first started and what your influences were.

RAINA: I actually first started with my very first boyfriend. He was a rider. I was probably 20 years old and just fell in love with it. Then I started riding as a single adult, a year ago, actually.

SUSAN: Uh huh..

RAINA: Took my first safety class last year and bought my first bike this spring.

SUSAN: Excellent. So, I'd like to hear about the safety class and I like to hear about your process of purchasing, as well.

RAINA: Okay, I went through what's called the ABATE safety course where you actually take a skills test and a written test. What it does, it occurs over the course of three days. It was on the West side of Indianapolis in a parking lot, actually. Like I said, we had skills where we had to do figure eights. We had to do left turns, right turns, straight-aways. We learned sudden stops, just everything about the bike, pretty much. From the use of your clutch to the use of your brake, you know, the fact that you have to use your clutch and your gas pretty much simultaneously, and you could not use the brake all the time. Well, right away, because what would happen is it would throw you. So, you had to be very, very careful. And, we had to pass the skills test in addition to the written test to be able to pass the course. You were allowed to miss up to 10. If you missed more than 10, you failed the course. And, of course, nobody wanted to do that.

SUSAN: Right! You were probably so excited about becoming motorcycle riders that you wanted to get to it.

RAINA: I waaasss. But, actually, I took the course last June (2011) and then I didn't get a bike until March. So I was thinking, "oh my gosh, I am scared to death. I don't know if I can do this." So, I kept thinking, do I really want to do this, do I really want to do this? So, I went to one of the local motorcycle shops here in town. I got back on the bike without a problem. I rode in their parking lot and you know, once I made a turn in the parking lot, I said, "I can still do this without having to retake the class."

SUSAN: Good

RAINA: So I found my first bike on Craig's List. I bought it in March. It was a Kawasaki 250 sport bike.

SUSAN: Um hmm

RAINA: And, actually, I've already sold it. Because, what I started thinking about, I was thinking that at 43, a sport bike really isn't age appropriate for me. Not to mention, because it was a sport bike, it made me want to kind of live on the edge and I'm like, "we gotta be smarter than that". Cause, being out there in that open air, it makes you just want to open it up.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

RAINA: So, I got a cruiser.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

RAINA: A cruiser. Uh hmm.

SUSAN: So, what's the CCs on that?

RAINA: It's a 600.

SUSAN: Okay

RAINA: It's more CCs. I really wanted the cruiser to start with, but I was a little bit afraid of it because it's much heavier than your sport bike and I actually did knock the sport bike over the same day I got it. And, I had a lot of difficulty getting it up on my own.

SUSAN: Okay. Interesting. So, you went to Craig's List. Did you shop around at any dealer's first?

RAINA: I did look at the dealer's but, my whole thing was, if I really don't want to do the (after all), I didn't want to invest a whole lot of money in a bike. Because, I felt like if I got it from a dealer, and they're not very expensive, but I felt like if I paid \$4,000 from a dealership, I wasn't going to get that value back if I sold it, if I decided I really don't want to do this. So, that's why I went to Craig's List where I could buy it from a person, or a private owner and then negotiate price.

SUSAN: Okay

RAINA: So, and that worked out really well because when I sold the one that I got from Craig's List, I didn't take a huge loss, at all. Whereas, with a dealer, I would have paid a lot more, maybe even would have had to finance it.

SUSAN: Okay, so I might have confused myself here. You bought the first smaller one on Craig's List.

RAINA: Correct

SUSAN: And then you sold it and then how did you obtain the second one?

RA: That one I did get from a dealer.

SUSAN: Okay

RAINA: The cruiser.

SUSAN: OK

RAINA: At that point I'd had the sport bike and I was pretty comfortable and felt like I was reeeaaady.

SUSAN: Right. Okay. So you didn't just kick the tires, you actually bought one at the dealership.

RAINA: Oh yes

SUSAN: So, now that you are riding, do you do it by yourself? Do you go with a group?

RAINA: I do it alone. At this point I don't ride on the highway, and I pretty much stay local riding to and from work. Because what I've found is that on the weekends, I really need my car because I'm doing everything that I couldn't do through the week, from working. You know, like going to the grocery store or going to do my shopping, things like that.

SUSAN: Right

RAINA: And, I don't ride after dark.

SUSAN: Okay. So then tell me about what you do for safety. Any gear, or practices?

RAINA: Did you say any gear?

SUSAN: Yah

RAINA: Oh, ah definitely wear a helmet and all times, even if I am just in my neighborhood. When I took it out just to practice, I wore my helmet at all times. I have an open helmet where the face mask lifts up or down. I don't wear gloves but I always wear a closed shoe, whether it's a boot or tennis shoe.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

RAINA: And, always wear long pants and long sleeves, as difficult as that can be.

SUSAN: Okay. I have heard that from quite a few folks.

RAINA: It's difficult, but you know, when those bugs and things start to hit you, and I'm surprised, I see a number of riders, female riders, in flip flops and shorts. That's just disturbing.

SUSAN: I agree. I actually just 15 minutes before I called you I was coming home and saw a woman with sandals and she had maybe Capri style jeans on.

RAINA: Oh my goodness!

SUSAN: But, yes, and really nothing on top, just a tank top.

RAINA: It's dangerous because the first time I rode, when I first went to work. I had on dress slacks, but I had on a boot, but it was a wide leg pant. My pants leg continuously got caught on my back pedal, my foot peg and I said, "never again!" It was a learning experience.

SUSAN: I guess!

RAINA: Uh hmm

SUSAN: Or, you'd have to get something to strap around, like a piece of elastic or something.

RAINA: Riiigghhtt. Uhm hmm.

SUSAN: Interesting. So, I have interviewed one other woman participant who rides who is under 50. So, she's not much older than you.

RAINA: Okay

SUSAN: She's been doing it thought for probably 20 years, and

RAINA: Wooowww

SUSAN: She has some interesting stories about the looks she gets because she's, I think she would look very perfect on a red carpet runway. She's that kind of feminine and pretty, as well.

RAINA: uhm hmm,uhm hmm

SUSAN: So, she says that she gets different looks. People are kinda surprised, but then a lot of the women who see her kind of give her a “thumbs up” because they think it’s neat that more women are riding.

RAINA: Right. Ummm, what I’ve found in riding that has completely turned me off is that it seems to be a come on. Guys kind of like that. And I had to say to one guy in my neighborhood, “look, I’m not out here for that.”

SUSAN: uh hmm..

RAINA: I’m not out here for that. You know, and I just found it to be offensive.

SUSAN: Interesting! Now, have you considered any groups that you might join?

RAINA: I haven’t, simply because I just started riding. Pretty much, I’m a loner. Now my supervisor, we actually went through the course together. She got her bike last year, right after the class. But, we haven’t been out together.

SUSAN: Okay, so you might, it’s just that you’re kind of new.

RAINA: Absolutely. Oh yes. Especially when I get ready to like, take it out on the highway. I would not want to be alone and doing something like that.

SUSAN: I understand. I actually heard that from someone as well. He never goes out unless it is with at least one other person.

RAINA: Uh hmm...

SUSAN: Okay. And then, the other thing that I ask people is, to think about any media representation of motorcycle riders, whether it’s an old movie, or whether it’s the way a newscaster covers a story about riding or anything, television.. can you think of anything that is media related that you have any thought or opinions on?

RAINA: I think with the media, they always tend to, I don’t know, I feel like place some blame on the rider if there is an accident. Before they know any toxicology tests or anything because often you will hear them say, “the person wasn’t wearing a helmet.”

SUSAN: Yes

RAINA: And, I mean, I’m not really sure that it’s necessary for that to be said. If you can’t say anything else about the individual, and then you never hear them come back and tell you anything positive that the individual might have done. You know, maybe they did great volunteer work or worked for some charitable organization. You never hear anything positive.

SUSAN: It’s almost a shame that they wouldn’t say something that has to do with the course that you took.

RAINA: uh huh! Yes

SUSAN: This person is a graduate of the ABATE course.

RAINA: Right, it’s never anything positive associated with it.

SUSAN: Huh. It’s not the first time I’ve heard that. So, this is something that I would like to look into further.

RAINA: Uh huh.

SUSAN: I’ll have to pay more attention to the news casts.

RAINA: And you do have to take a safety course and pass it before you can actually get your “endorsement” on your driver’s license.

SUSAN: Okay

RAINA: You'd think that would talk more about that. But, like you said, they don't.

SUSAN: When you went to purchase from the dealer, did they talk to you about gear or safety at all?

RAINA: I had a very good salesman that did talk about safety. You know, he even said that if I wasn't comfortable, he did not, you know, he wouldn't sell me the bike. I really liked that. I really liked that about him.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

RAINA: Because he wasn't just trying to make the sale.

SUSAN: Right, that was pretty big transition for you. You were going to a bigger and very different motorcycle.

RAINA: Uh huh. And like I said, that really stood out for me. And at this particular dealership, the salesperson actually came over to me. I went to another one on Washington St. where I wasn't acknowledged at all. And I'm like, well, you know, I'm not gonna buy anything out of here. I knew that. 'Cause I walked around the store for a while and no one acknowledged my presence, so I'm like, I'm not buying anything out of here.

SUSAN: I agree. I've had that happen at car dealerships.

RAINA: Uh hmm.

SUSAN: Or when you're there and the friend that you bring with just happens to me a man, they talk to him first.

RAINA: Yep

SUSAN: Yah. Laugh

RAINA: laugh

SUSAN: So, you're giving me not just the information on motorcycle riding, you're giving me the feminist perspective also.

RAINA: Yah

SUSAN: Very good. Well, any other thoughts that you'd like to share?

RAINA: Umm, no, I think that it's great for anyone that wants to pursue because it's actually been a long, long term goal and dream of mine. I had a five year plan and it was actually to buy my bike at 40. But, I bought myself a car for graduation when I finished my masters, so...

SUSAN: Uh huh

RAINA: and I'm like, you know what, I've been wanting this too long. I'm not gonna continue to wait.

SUSAN: That's neat. So, you'll get to enjoy some of the nice summer and fall weather now.

RAINA: That's riiiiiggghht. And, one other thing that was interesting, I did not have a lot of support in terms of family. My mother did not want me to do this. And, my significant other, he was very apprehensive about it.

SUSAN: Hmmm

RAINA: Very apprehensive about it. To the point, the first time I rode it to work, he actually followed me to work. And, when I got off, he was there. To follow me, so that you know, he'd feel a lot better. But I told him, I said, "you know, you can't continue to do this because it gives me a false sense of security."

SUSAN: Right

RAINA: So I told him, I said, "you know, for me to really be able to do this I need to have your buy-in and support." And, eventually he did, he gave in.

SUSAN: So you are two partners where one of you is a rider and one of you isn't.

RAINA: Right. He can ride, but he chooses not to because he just thinks of the danger that's involved. And I'm like, "you have to ride smart, you really do, I mean you have to be 10 times as alert."

SUSAN: Yes. And, you probably haven't gone and ridden it out to anywhere that you'd be drinking alcohol.

RAINA: Oh no, no, no. Like I said, I don't ride after dark. My comfort level, even driving isn't there, so I don't ride after dark.

SUSAN: Okay

RAINA: Uh uh.

SUSAN: Well, he supported you anyway, even though he doesn't like to do it.

RAINA: Uh huh.

SUSAN: That's very neat!

RAINA: You know, I kept talking to him and telling him, "I have to have your support behind me or I won't be able to do this knowing that you're worried and stressed out."

SUSAN: Right

RAINA: So, you know, we kept talking about it. And, I rode through the neighborhood quite a bit, you know, for him to be able to see me and see how I was stopping and going through intersections. Once he became comfortable in the fact that I could do it, and the bike wasn't cutting out because I let up off my clutch too soon, he was like, "Okay, I think you'll be alright."

SUSAN: I know, I drove a 5 speed car when I was younger. So, I know what you mean about having to do the gas and the clutch just at the right timing.

RAINA: Yes, (chuckle)

SUSAN: Very good. Well, thank you for your time.

RAINA: You're welcome. Good luck. What's your major

SUSAN: Applied communications, etc. I'm interested in what might persuade a person to wear a helmet when they don't have to, if there is no law.

RAINA: I know. Not enough of people wear them. I see it every day.

SUSAN: It's surprised me. Although, I've talked with people who have ridden for 30 years without a helmet, and never had an accident.

RAINA: I'm not willing to take that chance.

SUSAN: No

RAINA: I'm just not. I mean, and I am a heavy, heavy, sweater, but it's like it doesn't matter. When I get to the stop light, if I need to take the helmet off and beautify myself, I'll do that. But, I'm gonna ride with a helmet.

SUSAN: Right

RAINA: I just can't take that chance.

SUSAN: Thank you again, so much for your support.

RAINA: You're welcome.

Interview 11: Terry Randolph
8/24/12
Male, 43

SUSAN: I just read you the IRB requirements, so, with that in mind, do I have your permission to continue?

TERRY: Absolutely

SUSAN: Thank you. So, my first question is about what influenced you to become a motorcycle rider. Just take me back to the beginning. This is semi-structured. I have a few leading questions, but you're free to go off on any topic you like.

TERRY: I would have to say it was just as a little kid, and the excitement of riding. We had like a little mini-bike when I was probably five or six. My older brother rode it. My dad slooooooowwwly let me work my way up to riding it. That started it. The excitement of riding something on two wheels that went fast...

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: And then I had a little bit of a break. And then when I was 15 I road a moped as my primary transportation eeeevvverywhere I went. I didn't ride a bicycle. I rode that thing for miles and miles.

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: I mean 20 – 30 miles I would ride a little moped.

SUSAN: And what part of the country was this?

TERRY: Indiana.

SUSAN: Oh you were here I Indiana..

TERRY: Yes, so I could not ride all year, unfortunately

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: And then right here, I grew up on the south side of Indianapolis

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: so, I rode it around, I think, that kind of lead into also the, I think that's when I first started realizing, "Okay, this is awesome that I have the breeze, and I can see things..and I'm experiencin' nature, and you know, things of that nature as I'm riding. I think that's when I first realized it when I was young and I was riding a moped. And, then, it just led to my first bike, which I actually bought from my brother. It was a street bike.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: It was what's known as a crotch rocket. And, that was all about speed. My brother taught me how fast he could go. And then I realized, well this isn't the way like riding a bike. I like sitting. And then that's when I ended up with a cruiser and my first Harley.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm, okay

TERRY: Way back in '92? '94?

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: It was '92 or '93, riight before I went off to the military I bought my first motorcycle, on my own.

SUSAN: Okay. So, you got the crotch rocket from your brother...

TERRY: Uh huh

SUSAN: And then when you decided to transition to something else, how did you go about finding that?

TERRY: Uuummm, I think I did ask around. I asked buddies, “who’s selling?” Ya know, there wasn’t Craig’s List back then, of course. There was a lot of word of mouth, a lot of newspaper. And, I found an old beater bike that you now, needs work. I put some money down. My dad helped me with part of it. And then, my dad and I worked on it together and got it into good running state. And, I thiiinnk it was like a ’78 or ’79 Harley Davidson.

SUSAN: Oh! Neat!

TERRY: Yah, so it was what, even then, it was considered a little classic, but...

SUSAN: So, uh, did your father at that time have motorcycles, also?

TERRY: He did, when I was growing up. He had a little Honda, I don’t know what type. But, at that point, he didn’t. He had already gotten rid of it, or sold it. I know he had a motorcycle burn up in a barn fire that was on our, you know, typical housing area with barns.

SUSAN: Yah..

TERRY: Um, four barns in our neighborhood caught fire and ours did and burned a ton of stuff up, including a motorcycle. So, that miiight have been what happened to his. I can’t remember exactly.

SUSAN: Okay..I had someone with an opposite story. Everything burned except the garage, and the motorcycle was in the garage. Chuckle.

TERRY: Wow, yah, that’s some good luck.

SUSAN: yah, chuckle, I guess...

TERRY: Yah.

SUSAN: Okay, so then you bought that Harley. Then, you joined the military.

TERRY: Uh hmm

SUSAN: So, did you keep it or did you sell it because you had to go away?

TERRY: I had it for a couple years and then I did sell it. I didn’t ride it as much. I think my schedule played a role. And, I actually lost interest for some reason. I have no clue why. I got into fishing and hunting. I got into just being a single soldier living in the barracks.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: And, I think I just didn’t take the time to go enjoy it like I could have. I sold it off and spend that money probably on beer, and you know..

SUSAN: Fishing.

TERRY: Yah, exactly! Fishing stuff, hunting gear, and you name it.

SUSAN: Okay. Uhm, alright. So then, how did you get back into it?

TERRY: Uhm, I think, almost every soldier does something when they come back from deployment to spend money on. A lot of them buy guns. I do. I buy guns as well. And, a lot of guys buy Harleys. And I had, my buddy, I had a buddy that in ’06 or ’07 was like, “you haven’t ridden in a while, but why don’t you take my bike out?” You know, and he let me. Which is, I was shocked, because it was a beeeaaautiful, beeeaaautiful Harley Davidson Road King, which is a touring type bike.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: And I love it, and I knew then, okay, I gotta get back into riding. And that was like '06, I think.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: And I deployed in '08 for my last time. And, when I came back in '09, I had some money sitting there and said, "yup, I'm buyin' a Harley." And, I was influenced, there was a tooonnn of guys that I worked with that had Harleys. We had, I'd transitioned from the military, or was in the process of retiring, and I worked out in California at 29 Palms. A marine base, had tons of guys who rode, and I loved their bikes. So, I said, "you know, I'll sign up for the motorcycle safety course, and that should give me a good gauge of whether this really is something I'm gonna drop ten or fifteen thousand dollars on. And, uh, once I did the motorcycle safety course and I knew that I still had the skills and I saw other bikes, within a week, I went out and bought a bike.

SUSAN: Okay. I've heard a lot about those safety courses. And I think they are just such an excellent way to test the water to see if this is really what you want to do, whether it's spending a lot of money on something or just becoming a rider.

TERRY: Oh ya, it does. It was great because I knew where my comfort level was. And, if I was going to panic, or if I didn't feel comfortable doing controlled stops, you know short distances, locking up the breaks, swerving, going over obstacles, wide loops, all the different that happen in the course, if all that scared me, or if all that was like, "oh wow! I just panicked, then I'd kinda know, maybe this isn't good, you know? But I, it was great course. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the riding of it. Because it was only like a half day in the classroom. All the rest of it was out on a course.

SUSAN: And what do you use when you're out there? Is it, do they have different motorcycles for you?

TERRY: They do. Or, you can use your own.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: Most, a good motorcycle safety course, that is sponsored by MSF, Motorcycle Safety Foundation, has loaner bikes. And, that's what I rode.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

TERRY: I rode the loaner bike and it was, I mean, they're not top of the line Harley Davidson. They're usually an off market brand. But, they get the job done. And they're not usually that powerful, so nobody can go speedin' off to do anything crazy.

SUSAN: Like off through a plate glass window or anything?

TERRY: Exactly, oh ya!

SUSAN: Yah, I would do that, I'm sure.

TERRY: Laugh. And it did, it took me a little bit to get used to the brakes. And okay, how much pressure do I need to put on front brake vs back brake and all that. But, it came to me real quick. And, I was hooked.

SUSAN: Okay. It does seem to come back, especially for these folks who are (were) mini-bike riders. I think your muscles have memory. You learn that feeling of coordination.

TERRY: Absolutely, so we, I had a buddy who rides dirt bikes, on like tracks, and actually a little bit competitive.

SUSAN: Uhm hmm

TERRY: And he took a huge brake from like 25 to 35 (years of age) and ten years later he got on a dirt bike. Within a day, he was fine. And, he was competing within weeks.

SUSAN: Oh wow.

TERRY: So, yah, it does come back.

SUSAN: Okay, some brain activity relevance, probably with our new neuroscience folks, we could probably collaborate with them on that.

TERRY: Yah. That would be interesting to see. That's for sure.

SUSAN: So, you mentioned Harley and it seems like Harley was going to be your choice. Did you debate between Harley and anything else?

TERRY: Not at all.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: I knew I was buying a name, and I knew it was going to cost me more. I could buy an almost identical bike to what I have with my Harley and prooobably save two or three grand, maybe more.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm...

TERRY: But I knew I wanted a Harley. I knew it was just part of the name. I knew it was, okay, "he owns a Harley". For me it was also part of a, not necessarily image, but a more or less, I, it was just Harley Davidson. I always dreamed of owning a Harley again. And, I made it happen.

SUSAN: Does the fact that they are marketed as the "American" company have anything to do with it?

TERRY: It did! Absolutely. Hands down.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: Even though 911 had been seven years before, there is still the image and thought process of buying American. You know, built in America..

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: that "built by other Americans", who, that's what their job is...

SUSAN: uh huh

TERRY: It may not be mine, but it's theirs. Yah, that influence me a ton. And yes, technically there's Honda factories here, as we know..

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

TERRY: A big one here in Indiana

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: Uhm, and it's the same with other motorcycles. They are factories all over the U.S., that have American's working. But somewhere I just said, "No, I've got to buy American, I've got to buy a Harley." It's, ah, I want to be part of that club of Harley riders.

SUSAN: Okay, you just, you knew you fit into that culture.

TERRY: Yah, absolutely.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: And, I wanted to ride with other, and I've got people who don't own Harleys and I don't pass judgment on them. I am a little bit of a Harley snob, which is a whole 'nother topic we could get to. But, uh, and they chose other bikes, and that's fine for them. But, for me, it was part of, the guys I ride with, almost every one of 'em has a Harley.

SUSAN: Okay. So, you are not a loner. You do ride with other folks, and you have other friends.

TERRY: Absolutely

SUSAN: Tell me about the different things that you do with your groups, and small groups vs large organizations.

TERRY: Sometimes small groups, like when we were in California, might just be just to ride and to enjoy the scenery, things of that nature.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: Larger groups it's normally, for me at least, and what I experienced, was a trip somewhere.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: Prime example, July 5th through the 9th me and three other guys took off and drove to West Virginia. And rode the mountains of West Virginia. And the whole goal was to see the scenery, but at the same time, was riding, the camaraderie, we would stop riding like 6 in the evening.

SUSAN: Um hmmm

TERRY: And sit around the hotel rooms and just talking and sharin' stories and you know, and drinking beer.

SUSAN: um hmm

TERRY: And just enjoying, you know, fellowship, or you know...

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: But that was a group of four and the whole goal was to ride out to West Virginia and to see, there's a bridge out there, there's the ahh, ahh, wow. I what is the name of it. Wow, I can't believe I spaced it. (Maybe Wheeling)

SUSAN: Is that Blue Ridge Mountain area?

TERRY: It's a little bit North of that. Blue Ridge Mountains are in the south and there's a huge suspension bridge that's um, aw, I can't believe I spaced it just this early. I mean, it's only three months.

SUSAN: I don't know if I will know it. Well, you'll think of it.

TERRY: Oh ya. And then, we saw a place called Seneca Falls

SUSAN: uh huh

TERRY: The Seneca Rocks is a huuuuuge rock formation out in the forest. We saw some waterfalls. Things that were just beautiful scenery and that was the whole goal. And that was to ride the mountains, ride you now, and experience it. So, it was, the interstate time, I mean, it's nothing but interstate. Yah, you have trees on either side and it changes elevation, scenery, but, that's not where the, for me, the joy of riding is not necessarily on the interstates. It's riding back roads, county roads...

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: And experiencing the curves and the turns and hills and the scenery, you know.

SUSAN: Okay. And then, do you go on any bigger rides, for events?

TERRY: I have. I've ridden in what's called poker runs. I've ridden in charity runs. Um, I was out of town and I was gonna ride in Gov. Mitch Daniels big motorcycle rider that he does every year,

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: for ABATE, which is another motorcycle safety awareness type stuff.

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: And he does a huge ride. He's been a Harley owner for, I think if I looked at it right, he's been a Harley owner for over 30 years.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: So, even when he was younger.

SUSAN: I believe that.

TERRY: And yah, Gov. Mitch Daniels has a big ride he does every year as the governor. I guess he won't be doing it any more, obviously, but,

SUSAN: he might continue to do it, but maybe not as governor.

TERRY: Yah, exactly, I'm sure he will. He'll come down and he'll do the ABATE ride and everything, ah uhm. I've done rides like that. I've done rides as much as there was, I did a ride from. We took off from Palm Springs area to Riverside California. There must have been 150 riders.

SUSAN: Oh! Okay

TERRY: And it was on Memorial Day, and the whoooooole reason was just to ride to the National Cemetery.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: We had to ride for those who can't, which is a big belief that I have. As a retired-from-the military, I have a strong belief in riding for those who can't.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

TERRY: I've had buddies who didn't come back to their bikes. I've had buddies who came back to their bikes, but couldn't ride them because of injuries.

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: Or, lost a leg, things of that nature.

SUSAN: Right

TERRY: So, for the guys who can't ride, I still do. And, I believe in it strongly.

SUSAN: I think it draws national attention to causes.

TERRY: Oh, yah.

SUSAN: In a good way.

TERRY: Absolutely, and there's tooonnnnsss of motorcycle groups out there just for that reason.

SUSAN: Yah

TERRY: And, they raise money. And, they donate their funds, you know. And all the money they make, they give right back to a charity of some type.

SUSAN: When I've been speaking with my older group, because I'm doing this survey with group one, is 18 to 34; group 2 is 35 to 49, and group 3 is 50 and over.

TERRY: Uh hmm

SUSAN: From my 50 and over folks, and they may have started riding early or late, they stress to me how motorcycle riding is not motorcycle gangs. They are not gangsters anymore.

TERRY: Ohhhh

SUSAN: And, what just told me is one example of how some many people are doing things for good

TERRY: uh huh

SUSAN: And good causes and good, clean fun, I guess.

TERRY: You have "One Percenters" who do the same thing. One Percenters are those groups that are considered by the FBI as an outlaw motorcycle gang (something something G), couldn't hear. As a criminal justice major, of course, I've studied them and uh, there is One Percenter that, a lot of time they're doing good with their money, or some of their money, I should say.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

TERRY: and not eeervvery One Percenter, and eeervverrry member of, let's say the Outlaws, which of course, their big thing recently was getting busted. They raided the Outlaw house and all that.

SUSAN: Oh

TERRY: Some of them do, you know, ride for good causes.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: And then there are those bad seeds that their causes are not. The money they make is illegal, or from illegal activities. But, there's even One Percenters that some of the money they make they give back to a charity of some type.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

TERRY: I've haven't personally went to look, but I think there's um, there's been here in the Indianapolis area, I think both Outlaws and Hell's Angels have done donations to either Reilly Hospital or Lilly. I can't remember which one. It's been several years since I read it somewhere.

SUSAN: Uhm, hmm..

TERRY: But, at the same time, what's it for me to judge to say, "was that legitimate, or was that just trying to take some of the darkness away from..."

SUSAN: Yah, right

TERRY: But ya, there is that stereotype. I do have tattoos. And, sometimes people, you know, I've had it where I've been on a motorcycle with either a sleeveless short, or a shirt that showed my tattoos.

SUSAN: Um, hmm

TERRY: Mothers of small children were like, kind of, kind of stay away from me.

SUSAN: umm, hmm

TERRY: I've had, you know, and we've, I don't know. It's just all perception. I think this day and age, a lot more people are accepting of it. And, it's okay.

SUSAN: A lot of people don't dislike tattoos and they don't ride motorcycles.

TERRY: Right, absolutely.
 SUSAN: Right, it's an art form now.
 TERRY: So, ya, there is that stereotype that everyone is an outlaw biker that smokes pot, or does drugs, and beats people up.
 SUSAN: uh hmm
 TERRY: and drinks a lot, and gets in bar fights, and launders money and kills people if their club, needs it, you know.
 SUSAN: Uh hmm
 TERRY: I've never been a One Percenter in the sense that I've been part of them, and OMG, and what's called "Patched", which means that you have a bottom rocker with your leather vest, but, I've been to what's called a Coalition Clubs meeting in southern California, which has some of the biggest and most well-named gangs. There was, you know, outlaw motorcycles gangs, (One Percent Motorcycle Group, aka O.M.G.).
 SUSAN: Uh huh
 TERRY: There were probably 12 to 15 of them. There were several others that were not considered One Percenters by the FBI. And it was just a Coalition of Clubs meeting in Southern California and my purpose was to address the club and let them know that there was a new veterans motorcycle club that was forming.
 SUSAN: Okay
 TERRY: And, I was part of that and um, that we had no intention of trying to claim any specific territory. We had no intention of trying to you know, stake out any particular area or claim any particular bar or bars.
 SUSAN: Uh hmmm
 TERRY: And that, we were just a bunch of veterans who ride together and plan to ride together. And, we don't want to offend anybody within those groups. And, it was taken really well. Uhhmm, of course, at our meeting some questioned how many in this veteran group were cops? And, really none of us. All of us are retired or civilian military. We're all veterans of Iraq of Afghanistan.
 SUSAN: Uhm hmmm
 TERRY: And that was one big concern. What is this? Is this going to be a bunch of cops who are trying to get to know us?
 SUSAN: right
 TERRY: You know, obviously, that's what they were concerned about. Then they saw that we absolutely had no ill intentions other than we were going to ride and we wanted to be friendly enough to 'em.
 SUSAN: Right.
 TERRY: So I've had that, kind of a unique experience, cause most people don't get to go sit in a Coalition of Clubs meeting with One Percenters because they do kind of screen and say, "okay, what is your purpose, why are you gonna come to this meeting?" "Who are you?" "What's your background?"
 SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: and I'm sure they had people follow me or at least do a background and say, okay, this guy's not a cop.

SUSAN: Right. Well, you've introduced me to a new concept. I didn't know about the FBI and the One Percenters.

TERRY: Hmmm?

SUSAN: I know, I've heard people that type of group. I didn't know that it was labeled as such.

TERRY: Yup, One Percenters because I think what the 1% stands for is that 99% of people do the right thing all the time. And then there's the 1% who don't.

SUSAN: Uh hmm.

TERRY: And that's why they call themselves, the One Percenters (One Percent Group, aka O.M.G.).

SUSAN: Okay. That IS interesting.

TERRY: Yah, and you'll see most O.M.G.s, a lot then will have something that says One Percent on their patch. Many of them have tattoos, visible tattoos that say 1%. Or, they'll have a tattoo and you have to look carefully to see the 1 inside of it.

SUSAN: That is a thesis right there. I could do a thesis just on that.

TERRY: Oh yah, easily could. That's a whole 'nother, yah, absolutely. And I've known criminal justice majors who have. They've studied just the O.M.G. and how many of them are really, truly legit, like the ride and they like to be part of a club and hang out and how many of them are engaging in illegal activity and are a part of that group that the FBI watches carefully.

SUSAN: Right. I can't blame them. Well, you mentioned the training course that you took in California. I'm sure they talked about safety in that class and I am wondering if you could share with me what you do to protect yourself. And, any of your thoughts on safety.

TERRY: California had the helmet law, so I had to wear the helmet. On base, on almost any Dept. of Defense installation you have to wear long pants, long shirts, you have to wear eye protection and closed toed shoes.

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: So, for the first, once I bought my bike in September '08, I rode just like that, because I was riding on base, or riding up to work. And, you have to wear gloves too. I wore safety gear. Now, not so much. The only thing safety wise that I do is wear long pants. I've ridden a motorcycle only one time in my life in a pair of shorts.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: I see guys riding in shorts with flip flops and no shirt, and they've got a girl on the back who is wearing shorty shorts and you know, I'm like, "wow!" That's, for me, if something happens and my legs are covered in some kind of pants, jeans preferably, maybe I can walk away from it.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: Without too much road rash on my legs. You know, I could still walk around if my back is all jacked up. Now, bear in mind, if I hit my head, it's really, you know (motions with hands turned up).

SUSAN: Hmmm?

TERRY: And at the same time, in California, and the helmet that I currently have and rode with it part of the time when I was out in West Virginia because Ohio is a helmet state. Or, West Virginia is one of the two.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: Maybe, West Virginia is the helmet state, I think (verified, this is true).

SUSAN: Uhm hmm

TERRY: If I layed my bike down and I hit my head, it's prroooooobably not going help me. It is not a full-faced helmet, it's called a half helmet, or skid lid is the nick name for it.

SUSAN: Alright, laugh

TERRY: Very popular among Harley riders. Very popular among anybody who wants to make that choice themselves. I believe it's a personal choice. I don't believe a state should regulate. I don't know if you want me to go into this.

SUSAN: I do. I do because I am so naïve. I could listen to people who are very much for it and also those who are very much against it and I would like to know your thought process.

TERRY: Yah, I don't pass judgment on those who ride with helmets. There's guys who do. I kind of laugh when there's somebody with a big, bulky helmet that is restricting their vision, they've got it all strapped down nice and tight, but yet they're wearing shorts, flip flops and a tank top. Ya, you're head might be protected, but what's the odds? You have to weigh the odds. You have to look at it and, I also have another believe that if it's my time, it's my time. I can wear a helmet with a full, leather riding suit, closed-toed shoes, gloves, the whole protective gear, prepared for like a professional riders who lay their bikes down. If it's my time, it's my time.

SUSAN: Oh

TERRY: Best example of that is when the moto GP came last weekend, during their time trials, one of the riders hit his head and was unconscious, had to go to the hospital, and he didn't even race the rest of that weekend.

SUSAN: I saw that on the news.

TERRY: Yah,

SUSAN: He was all the way flat.

TERRY: Yah, he was a famous rider. A lot of people liked him. So, for me, if it's my time, it's my time. I've known guys who have wrecked horribly bad and they survived it with no head injuries. I've know guys who have hit their head with no helmet on and survived with no head injury. And, then I've seen the exact opposite like last weekend, full gear, and head injuries. You know, I'm a spiritual guy. I put it in God's hand. If that is what God intended, or how it would be my time, you know, if it was my time to go to heaven, and if it's gonna be from a motorcycle accident where I hit my head and it kills me, then so be it.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: And it's the same philosophy I had as a soldier in Iraq. If it's my time to be killed in combat, then it is. There is nothing I personally can do to stop it if that's my destiny.

SUSAN: Uh huh, okay

TERRY: Ya know. And, like I said, I don't pass judgment on those who get all decked out in full riding gear. I just don't. I don't ride with a helmet unless I am going to state that has a helmet law. I very rarely wear a jacket of any type, at least a protective jacket (doesn't wear a protective jacket). But, I do wear long pants and closed toes shoes and gloves. I wear gloves mainly for the grip and to keep the vibration from hurting my hands, than for protective reasons. And I wear eye wear, obviously.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: Bugs hitting your eyeball is not fun.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: So, I wear eye protection. I have clear lenses for night and dark lenses for day. I wear eye protection every time I ride, even if I'm doing 20 mph. You never know when that rock might kick up.

SUSAN: Right. Uhm, where do you buy the glasses? These are impact resistant, but most of mine are military issued. So, they are impact resistant and resistant to fragmentation and you know, bullets. So, I know that they'll stop a rock.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: I happened to not have to buy anything for riding specifically because I've always had 'em from the military.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: And I have four or five different pairs I use when I ride. I see which ones I like most. Sometimes there's goggles. A lot of prefer goggles for eye protection because it keeps the wind from getting into your eyes and making your eyes water.

SUSAN: Right. The weather could really effect that.

TERRY: Oh yah it does! This morning, it was a little bit chilly and my eyes watered because there was just enough wind getting behind my eye protection and my sunglasses.

SUSAN: Speaking of the safety again, have you ever been in an accident yourself.

TERRY: Yes

SUSAN: Okay, what was that like?

TERRY: It was the first time I laid this bike down. I had an accident where I got too wobbly and I managed to dump the bike without out injury. It was in some grass and in some dirt, when I was younger. This was, I'm trying to think, summer of 2010?

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: Heavy traffic up in the high desert of Yucca Valley. CA62 runs to the middle of the desert, so there's a looooot of sand that blows across that, you know, from the Mohave Desert.

SUSAN: Um hmmm

TERRY: And I was in heavy traffic and I knew where I needed to turn, but a car stopped kind of quick, so I went ahead to make the turn, but there was a car that was ready to pull out of where I was turning in. So, I couldn't make the turn as wide as I wanted to, to avoid the sand. As soon as my

front tire hit that sand, it just immediately dumped me. And I was going probably 30 mph.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: I went knees and hands first into the pavement. My head or chest didn't hit. Jacked my knee up a little bit, it was swollen.

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: My gloves had major scrapes on them, but I didn't hit my head and it didn't mess up my bike. It scratched a lot of chrome, but no paint, and it didn't break anything.

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: I was able to ride it away

SUSAN: Okay

TERRY: Of course, adrenalin was there. I was a little bit scared. I was a little bit mad. I felt frustration that I laid my bike down.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: Would have been mad at the other driver for not giving me enough room. Because, he technically was on my side of the road. When you are coming out of a drive, you're supposed to be on the right side. He was sitting in the middle. There wouldn't have been room for a car to pull in there. I had a little bit of room on a motorcycle. If he would have been over to the far right side, I might have been okay, so I was mad about that. Mad that it hurt. More than anything I was mad that I'd just laid my bike down.

SUSAN: Yah

TERRY: You know, I'm the other riders have told you the motto. There's those who have laid their bike down and those who will. It is a matter of time before something, even if it's at 5 mph in a parking lot and you just lose your balance. You will lay a bike down. It's inevitable. Every dude, almost every rider I've known has wrecked a bike at least once.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: So I was like, "okay, I got it out of the way, not too bad, I'm not injured. Okay, I got it out of my system."

SUSAN: Yes, I have heard that it's not if, it's when.

TERRY: So, that is how I kind of dealt with it.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: I was okay.

SUSAN: And of your group, or your friends that you've known, have you been around when they have had an accident? Or, have they had anything memorable?

TERRY: I wasn't around, but one of the guys who rode to West Virginia. He was riding last year, up in Michigan in the UP, and they were going to some beautiful lighthouse. It takes a dirt road to get there. When he hit the dirt road he thought he was okay, but his front tire dug in. In order to stabilize himself, he was fine, but his wife on the back also tried to stabilize herself. When she did, her leg caught in the sand and immediately turned her entire body. The bike started to wreck.

SUSAN: Ohh!

TERRY: Her leg said in the sand and it broke her leg in like 6 spots.
 SUSAN: Oh, my gosh.
 TERRY: So, his bike was damaged but not bad enough that he couldn't follow the ambulance on his bike.
 SUSAN: Ohhhh
 TERRY: He did not ride for a little while. His wife did not ride at all for a long time. He considered selling his bike because he felt so much guilt that he just hurt his wife, you know?
 SUSAN: Uh huh
 TERRY: That type of thing. But about four or five weeks later he got back on his bike. He said it's just like anything else. When you're a little kid and you wreck your bike, what does your dad do when he is trying to teach you? Get right back on.
 SUSAN: Yes, right back on.
 TERRY: I have that same philosophy. I've been on parachute jumps where guys dies because their chute didn't open.
 SUSAN: Uh hmmm
 TERRY: And, immediately, we went back up. I don't mean the same day, but normally, anybody who was on it, or knew him, or that group of jumpers on that particular path normally go right back up within a day. Because if you don't that's when it sets in. You start questioning if it's what you want to do.
 SUSAN: Uh huh.
 TERRY: It's that same philosophy with motorcycle wrecks, you know you think, this happened. Do I really want to ride anymore? I know people who have died. 29 Palms, same area, there is a cross wind at the very end of CA 62 where it meets interstate 10. There are lots of windmills. There are crosswinds easily 40 mphs. There's the Santa Ana winds, if you know anything about those.
 SUSAN: Yes, I lived in the Southwest. I know what you mean.
 TERRY: This guy was riding his sport bike almost 80. That was a little fast. But, not that bad on that portion of highway. The crosswind caught him and he wasn't prepared for it. Boom off the road! Wrecked his bike and his body went onto the other side of the highway and got it. It didn't deter me though. It was one of those things where I didn't witness it. But, I knew him. It sucked. Pause
 SUSAN: uh hmmm
 TERRY: But it's part of riding. It happens. It was his time. It was mother nature, you know. Truly a force of wind in that sense. He wasn't being dumb. It wasn't another rider's fault, which sometimes happens.
 SUSAN: Right
 TERRY: It was just his time.
 SUSAN: I've driven Phoenix to up here a few times and sometimes I've gotten across New Mexico on almost no gas because wind would just take you across when you're heading East. And they put the warning flags up.
 TERRY: Uh huh

SUSAN: You know like, the accident that happened here at the state fair last summer, the wind comes out of nowhere and they can't always be predicted.

TERRY: Absolutely

SUSAN: That is a shame, though.

TERRY: And that probably for me, that's one of my biggest factors, mother nature, winds. Am I prepared for it? As long as I catch it and stabilize. I've ridden that same tract where I was leaning by bike, I don't know what degree of an angle, but I was leaning towards the wind and still going straight.

SUSAN: Um hmm. Really a balancing act.

TERRY: Yah. It does feel like it. And sport bikes are a little different. There's a lot mo to catch the wind because of the all plastic pairing (paring?).

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: With Harley, at least the wind sometimes can gt through, and get across us.

SUSAN: Alright.

TERRY: But, that's Mother Nature. And Mother Nature, of course, with rain, that plays a role.

SUSAN: Yah

TERRY: It isn't necessarily Mother Nature, but it's part of the road, gravel is another big one that I've had some issues with. I didn't lay my bike down...

SUSAN: Especially out west.

TERRY: And right now there's a huge gravel spot on that back road that goes past the prison system in Plainfield (Indiana) when you turn left to out what becomes Hadley.

SUSAN: Yup

TERRY: Right at the turn off that goes to the law enforcement academy, that stop sign, that intersection has a ton of gravel.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: My truck spins its tires in that gravel. So needless to say, I'm extremely cautious on my bike right there and in gravel. Cars behind me wonder why I am taking my sweet time getting through the stop sign.

SUSAN: Good to know.

TERRY: That gravel is horrible on a bike.

SUSAN: Yah

TERRY: I am reeeaaaalllly cautious about gravel. Twigs of things like that, I can swerve, or ride over and adjust. There's just a lot of factors that you really have to look out for and mother nature is most of it.

SUSAN: Okay, so last question is about the media. When you think of anything, it could be pop culture, it could old movies, new movies, the way newscasters cover a story about motorcycle riders or riding, do you have any thoughts that come to mind?

TERRY: Classic movie, they just had it on TV, of course, is Easy Rider.

SUSAN: uh huh

TERRY: And that was stereotypical 1960s ridin' Harleys. They'd stop at night and camp out and smoke a bunch of pot.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

TERRY: And everyone was like, "ooh that's what biker do." And then you have Wild Hogs that came up with a bunch of big name actors...

SUSAN: Um hmm

TERRY: They were also Harley riders and they're older. They go off on this big trip. It's a comedy..I think that is a good comparison of media and one director's view versus another. Whatever way you want to look at it, 60s versus millennium decade.

SUSAN: um mm

TERRY: The media too. What used to be, I think, they would shy away from doing a story on bikers and getting together and poker runs, and all the things that still occurred 30 – 40 years ago, might theory now is that they embrace it. For example, last week with moto GP they also had a rally with hundreds of motorcycles downtown and media covered it.

SUSAN: Um hmm

TERRY: At least THR did, channel 13 did. And anything else, like Sturgis. Almost any given week, even when Sturgis or Daytona isn't going on, you can find something on the Discovery Channel or History Channel about it. Now it has been embraced because it is such, in my opinion, the stereotype is somewhat gone..

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: And now it's folks realizing that these are huge events that bring thousands of people. And that it's now, well, yes, some of it is a big party scene. But, then there's bike competitions. And, then you have shows. OCC is the biggest one. Orange County Choppers. They get their own TV show.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

TERRY: And, I think they are going to be up for another season.

SUSAN: Oh

TERRY: But Discovery Channel followed them for years, including the break up where the son split off.

SUSAN: uh hmm

TERRY: Where Paul Jr. split off and basically was fired by his dad, they had started their company together, and Paul started his own company. The fact that something like that can be on prime time TV and have huuuge ratings from little kids to adults to Christians to non-Christians, it doesn't really matter, to have ratings like that, is huge. I don't know if that would have worked ratings wise, 30 or 40 years ago. But now it does.

SUSAN: Right. It's just funny what you toss out there and what people have an interest in.

TERRY: Absolutely

SUSAN: That proves the community is very large, I would say.

TERRY: And it is. And even people who don't ride still have an interest. Best example is the Harley Davidson Museum in Wisconsin. They estimate that

10 to 15% of their visitors are not bikers. They are just touring a museum because 1, it's a museum and 2, they're interested in bikes even though they are not riders.

SUSAN: Me too. I don't know why I have an interest in this. But, I do.

TERRY: You don't ride, you've never ridden in your life, right?

SUSAN: No, just maybe a mile in a forest preserve for a picnic at a very low rate of speed. I don't know if I would ever do it because it does scare me. But, I do have to say that it sounds like a lovely experience in many cases.

TERRY: Oh yah. And, I'm separated right now, but our leisure activity for my wife and I, and I know tons of other couples that like to do that for a date night. Going for a ride shows you natural beauty and landscapes that you can't get the same enjoyment from in a movie theater.

SUSAN: Uh hmm.

TERRY: Many, many women are now riders. There's a whole topic there we could go off on.

SUSAN: I know and I have met a few. They have an interesting perspective also.

TERRY: Oh yah. It's not a man's thing. 40 years ago, in the 60s, yah it was a man's thing to ride a motorcycle, and to be part of any motorcycle club. But, nowadays there are women riders all the way from celebrity, celebrities that ride..the famous one I know of is the pool player, I think her name is the Black Widow. She has a custom Harley that's, I don't know, a \$50K Harley and she rides it like a champ.

SUSAN: She knows what she's doing.

TERRY: Yah, there's I think the media relevance because the only reason I know about the Black Widow is because I saw it on TV.

SUSAN: Um hmm

TERRY: ESPN showed her shooting pool, but then also did bio on her and included the Harley riding. I bought my Harley from a female. She's ridden all her life.

SUSAN: Uh huh

TERRY: I've never ridden with a female in my group, I don't why. In the very big rides there were some women, but in my smaller group, no. I think it's just 'cause I have guy friends.

SUSAN: Uh huh.

TERRY: Women can handle just like any guy can.

SUSAN: Yah, I know

TERRY: And that is something the media hasn't grasped yet. I don't even know if America has grasped it. Oh, here's this female. She rides a Harley. She must have tattoos. She must smoke. She must, you know, be promiscuous, she must cuss like a sailor, she must be wild....and that's not true. I know plenty of Christian women who ride motorcycles.

SUSAN: uh huh. They're business people during the day and ride on weekends.

TERRY: Right. I don't think the media has embraced that yet, in the sense of women riders. I think there is still a little bit of a stereotype for women riders or women who ride on the back of bikes.

- SUSAN: That sends me off in another direction as well. I am getting all sorts of good topics for sub-studies. I have interviewed some women and they were people I met in the business community. Just like any other woman in an office.
- TERRY: Right
- SUSAN: Any other thoughts that you would like to share about motorcycle riding?
- TERRY: No, other than I am glad somebody is taking steps in education and doing stuff like this, as far as the higher education level, and a graduate level. That just exposes motorcycle riding more to people. It's good that people are really taking the time to understand riders.
- SUSAN: Well, I am going to turn the recorder off now. Thank you so much for your time. I also want to thank you for service to our military.
- TERRY: You're welcome.

Later I shared with Terry that I am concerned about traumatic brain injury. Terry was a talker and we continued to talk more after I thought the interview was over. He mentioned that he thinks that being a military guy, once he gets out of active duty, he has the mindset that he has cheated death once, and he believes that riding a motorcycle is an adrenalin rush, and almost a competition to cheat death again. It's just a mindset that he believes that many military people have. He told me that he has had many friends who upon coming home have been caught speeding on a motorcycle at like 110 mph. They get really high fines because they have done something drastic like that. He also says that he may consider the fact, that now he is married and has step children, he needs to provide for them. If he were to have an accident and not die, he wouldn't want to be a burden on anyone. He also expressed concern that he has a 15 year old step son and maybe Terry should be setting an example for him, because he certainly would want him always to engage in safe behavior. This was Terry's final comment of the interview.

Interview 12: Gary Bennett

8/9/2012

Male, 43

SUSAN: (Read IRB requirements) With that being said, do I have your permission to go ahead with this interview?

GARY: Yes

SUSAN: Alright. Thank you. Before my first question, I should stop to tell you that this interview is unstructured. I ask certain questions, but if you think of anything that is relevant, please feel free to interject. I'm just wondering how you got started. What influenced you to become a rider, whether it was just a particular interest or if it was people around you...?

GARY: I have a passion for risk taking..and that would be why I ride.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: I've ridden motorcycles my whole life. When I was a kid, bikes, BMX, anything on two wheels, I've been interested in and that's why I ride.

SUSAN: Since you were way younger..

GARY: Right

SUSAN: Okay, and is that your red bike out there?

GARY: Yah

SUSAN: Okay, so do you ride with other people? Who have been the people that you've enjoyed riding with?

GARY: I'm actually one of the officers of a local Ducati riders group.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: I ride with a group. We meet up. Well, I can meet up weekly, with individuals and ride.

SUSAN: Uhm hmm

GARY: We take long rides all over the Midwest area.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: But, I also get on my bike and ride by myself.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: Most of the time I feel safer when I ride by myself than with a group of people.

SUSAN: Uh hmm. Do you ever go on those big events like charity rides with a lot of people?

GARY: Yes. I haven't done the miracle mile, again, it's safety that is my priority. I just think that in some of those big riding events you have a mixture of riders. And I just don't trust some of the riders out there, or their skill level. So, I stay out of those big riding events. But, I've done a few charity events, and poker runs, and, that type.

SUSAN: I've heard that same thing from other riders, which some of them don't like to out completely alone, but some of them don't like to go out in groups other than their close group of people, that they are confident in their abilities.

GARY: Yah

SUSAN: So, take me through the history of the motorcycles that you've purchased. I assume that you have had a few of them over your lifetime.

GARY: Yup. Well, uh, I started out with like a little Tecumseh motorcycle. You actually pull started it. I was probably 7 or 11 then. I migrated into dirt bikes. I rode a Honda 80 dirt bike. And uh, I kind of would jump on anything a friend had, a motorcycle, I would jump on 'em and ride 'em. I would jump hills and do all that; I guess crazy stuff that most people don't do.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Uh

SUSAN: That's part of the, that's like a carved out sport now.

GARY: Right

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: My first sport bike I got when I was in college. So, I bought a Kawasaki Ninja 500 and I chose a 500 because I didn't want somethin' too big and I could afford it. It was only a few thousand dollars.

SUSAN: That's not too small either though, is it?

GARY: Right. And then I rode that throughout college. Then when I graduated I like the Kawasaki bikes and I bought a, it was ZX 7R, which was one of the first bikes that had the dual headlights on the front. So, it was kind of sporty looking and pretty cool and very fast.

SUSAN: So, was that new when you bought it?

GARY: Yes, I buy all my bikes new.

SUSAN: Okay, and what year?

GARY: That was probably around '95 or '96

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: My first one I bought back probably around 91 or 92.

SUSAN: So that was your post college bike.

GARY: Yes, and the kind of bikes that I rode in college were the 500. When I left college, then I stepped into something, which I could afford, that was a little money, and it was a popular bike to have. You know, amongst some of the people that I rode with.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: I actually crashed that one. Chuckle

SUSAN: I will want to hear about that later too.

GARY: Laugh, so I wrecked that one and I promptly went out and got another bike similar to the one I had. I rode that for a few years and then, maybe two additional years. And then something snapped in my head and I just gave it up. I stopped riding. Then I started looking at the risk, and when I was, my career and everything, started to become more important to me. So, I actually sold the bike and got myself a Corvette, of course. Laugh

SUSAN: Okay, laugh

GARY: Which was again, speed, fast. Probably every spring I would go through the jitters. You'd hear the bikes out and stuff, and you know, the next thing you know, I'm out and I'm buying another bike. So, I bought another bike around maybe, this has been a while. It was probably about

2007? I think 2007 or 2008. And of course, I bought the biggest bike you could get. I've always rode sport bikes.

SUSAN: Uh huh

GARY: So I got a Kawasaki Ninja ZX14, which is 1400 CC sport bike.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: Laugh

SUSAN: That *IS* really big.

GARY: Uh huh

SUSAN: Yah

GARY: Yes, and um, I started going on long trips. I'd go to like West Virginia, and I did a couple trips to West Virginia and I'd go to Tennessee, Kentucky and ride out you know, on all the curvy roads out there. And then I took another ride out to bike week and I stayed out in a resort out there. I rode for six days. On the seventh day I came out and my motorcycle was gone.

SUSAN: Oh my Goodness!!

GARY: Someone had stolen it.

SUSAN: Unreal!

GARY: Yah, and um, I wasn't too happy. I went back to the dealership. They did not want to give me. Well, my insurance company did not want to give me replacement value cause the dealership said, well, we got 'em on sale. I'm losing \$3,000.

SUSAN: Uh huh.

GARY: Then I went to arbitrate that and they gave me an extra \$1,500. And then I took that, and found a Ducati dealership, which I had no idea what a Ducati was. I was an avid bike rider, but I always surrounded myself with Japanese bikes.

SUSAN: Uh hmm. Ducati is Italian?

GARY: Yes it is. It's the Ferrari of bikes.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: They range from \$17,000 to \$75,000. So, some of those bikes, they're nostalgic. So, I went into the shop. I fell in love with it. And you know, that's what I own now.

SUSAN: I hope you have a better insurance company now.

GARY: Ahh, you're always at a loss when you have a toy. They're just toys.

SUSAN: Yah

GARY: So, you, yah

SUSAN: Wow...I'm happy to talk with someone, well, first of all, you're younger. I have three age groups. I have my 50 and over, and that's my demographic. So it's easy for me to tap into all my friends. A lot of them are the Harley riders. But then I am learning from some of the younger folks, about these Japanese bikes, the rest. I guess I am little curious, about the Harley Davidson mystique. But now I do know a little bit about the Japanese bikes and others, now the Ducati. So this is interesting that you're kind of a connoisseur of both.

GARY: Yah, I am. I live and breathe it now. And, I mean, I never did. The Japanese bikes I didn't really admire or think it was a piece of art or anything like that. When I found the Ducati, there's a more, the demographic that rides them, is different, and you do have people in their 40s and 50s. The owner, I think, is in his 60s and he gets out on the track doing 170 mph. And he's in his 60s on one of these bikes.

SUSAN: Well, I think you might have to be a little older to afford something like that.

GARY: Yah,

SUSAN: And I only know that one of my older demographic has that (a Ducati).

GARY: And, you won't find a lot of people, I tend to get things that a lot of people don't have. You know, so, everyone is riding, I started out years ago where if someone was riding that or this, I don't want to join that group of people that everyone has one. I think was something where I found that not everybody rides a Ducati. And, if they do, they don't have because they work so hard. They can afford it, but they have to work hard.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: Just like some Harley riders, a lot of their bikes are probably sitting in the garage except for the ones, that you know, again, they may live and breathe and have that room run a bike like that.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: I looked at Harleys. I just, I'm not comfortable riding slow. Chuckle

SUSAN: Umm hmm. Okay

GARY: Even thought I could, I mean, it could be optional bike. But, I just don't see myself getting something that I'd have to put so much time and energy into, and upkeep,

SUSAN: Well, then I have another question. And I will ask it from two different standpoints. One is that you told me that you go to a dealership to buy the bike. One of my questions is, when you're at the dealership, and they are selling you this bike, are they selling you anything else about safety at that time? Are they trying to sell you a helmet? Do they talk to you at all about safety?

GARY: My other question is about how you protect yourself.

GARY: The Ducati dealership will sell you all the safety gear. And, I'd say 90% of the people I ride with, maybe 95%, ride with full, 100% gear on. So, when we go on a big trip, we've got leathers from head to toe, and helmets. No one in my group, or any of the Ducati group, rides without a helmet. We just don't do it. And we all wear leather jackets, gloves, occasionally, I don jeans. For just around, I'll have jeans on. But, if I go on a ride, we're, everybody is fully suited. It doesn't matter what the temperature is.

SUSAN: Alright

GARY: I'd say, just out of all the, when I go out and see the riders, if you were to come to a Ducati outing or an event, you'd see that at least covered in head to toe in leather.

SUSAN: uh hmm

GARY: Again, they can afford it. That's the thing. Most of your younger group that have the Japanese bikes, they can't afford to go get a full leather suit, which could be up to \$1,000 right there.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: And, let alone a helmet. You know, this one was \$1,000 just for the helmet. Where, they might buy something, or not even ride with a helmet. A lot of people riding without gear, the first thing I think is, "idiot!". Sometimes when I'm wearing jeans I don't feel safe.

SUSAN: Right, and I suspect these are extra thick denim jeans.

GARY: Right.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: The dealership where I bought this from, they do try to sell you all of the accessories with the bike. Helmet, leathers, they actually gave me a jacket when I bought my bike. So, the first thing, well, I told them that I'd gotten my bike stolen. I said, "all my stuff is Kawasaki". My gear matched that bike. So, I spent thousands on my gear and everything like that.

SUSAN: Yah

GARY: And he goes, "Well, I'll tell you what. We'll throw something in." You know, even my boots are..

SUSAN: Oh, I see!

GARY: Yah, they've got metal

SUSAN: Metal on the outside!

GARY: Yah. There's a couple parts of my body, like my legs, they're probably going to get beat up anyway. But, I don't want to lose my feet, get my ankles broken, or anything like that. So, I always wear boots that protect me feet, 'cause I gotta walk.

SUSAN: Right.

GARY: Your legs will heal up, but your feet..

SUSAN: Right, because there are so many little bones in that area?

GARY: Yah. And, I always wear gloves. You know, when you asked me about my accident, my gloves kind of saved the rest of me. I was able to brace myself with my gloves. So, I feel naked without the components that I am wearing.

SUSAN: Can you tell me about this helmet? Because, it looks like there's probably a lot of features to it that are advanced. So, what it is about this Ducati helmet? Why you chose it? Why it is comfortable?

GARY: Well, this brand right here, Arie

SUSAN: Oh, Arie?

GARY: Yah, Arie, they're just known for their safety. It's probably one of the highest rated safety helmets out there. Like your racers where this helmet. It's very light weight. So it you feel the helmet..

SUSAN: Oh, that's not bad at all.

GARY: Yah, and if you pick up a helmet that's not one of these, you're gonna say, it's gonna be probably a half of a pound, or a little more heavy, which puts stress on your neck, or whatever.

SUSAN: And now, there are some features here that make it more aerodynamic, or is that just to make your head cooler?

GARY: Actually, it has kind of a thing back there that forces the helmet down at high speeds.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

GARY: So, as you are going there are pieces on here to flip. It is meant to be aerodynamic while you're riding.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: Just these features, those just let air into the helmet.

SUSAN: Okay, so that's how they make it a little more comfortable.

GARY: I mean, you want things to breath. You don't want your visor to fog up.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: So, it's got little vents all over the place to help you breathe.

SUSAN: Right. Okay.

GARY: Plus, they know when it's an 80 degree day; you want to get some air flowing in there quickly.

SUSAN: So, do you ever pull this up (touching the front facial visor) when you are riding?

GARY: Only when I am stopped. I will open that up.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: If you have something come at you, I mean, you're going to lose an eye if you don't have the visor down. I saw a guy the other day riding without even having glasses on. And it just takes a second for your eye to be punctured. So, I don't understand. I've been hit by stuff and it hurts. You know, so.

SUSAN: I know. How did you acquire your safety knowledge, your training?

GARY: I took a riding safety course. I don't know, that was yeeaaars ago. I read. I actually read like what I should do in certain instances.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: You know, I use the internet. I google different scenarios. When I ride, I make sure that I know that I am aware of everything around me, all of the time. So, I'll look back and I'll calculate the timing of cars.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Like typically, I never ride next to car. I don't ride within so many feet of a car. I either get away from it or ride farther back from a car. I position myself on the road, where I can escape. So, if someone pulls out..I am not gonna ride to the right of a street when there's cars that can come into my path.

SUSAN: uh hmmm

GARY: And, if I am stopped at a light, I angle my bike so I can shoot out because that's really the only fear I have. I don't have a real big fear of someone pulling out on me.

SUSAN: Uh huh

GARY: Because if it's a street like this (Rt. 267 in Brownsburg, 45 mph, busy most of the time) I'm riding the speed limit, or, a little bit slower. Because, I just know that someone if going to pull out.

SUSAN: Because there is a lot of activity.

GARY: Right, so here, would not be a place where you would let go and have fun with the bike. You are very aware of your environment, at least I am. I know a lot riders ride just like they're behind a wheel and don't even pay attention. Me, I'm watchin' eeevery single thing. And, I always have an escape route. And, I tell my friends and other people when we talk, I always ride smart. I mean, ride where you can escape from something.

SUSAN: That's how they teach you how to drive a car.

GARY: Yah.

SUSAN: I mean, leave some distance, or..

GARY: Right. And, I already know, if something happens, just ride for the ditch. Laugh, I mean..

SUSAN: It's softer.

GARY: Yah, better than concrete.

SUSAN: So, you mentioned that you had an accident. So, was it just one?

GARY: Yah. It was just early in the morning and my tires weren't warm. The thing on a sport bike, the compound of the tire, there is no tread on the tire. It's needs to be warm. And when those are cold, they're like ice, almost. They'll spin out from you, or whatever. I just went into a turn too quick and I down shifted. There is no, these bikes don't tell you what gear they're in.

SUSAN: Oh.

GARY: So, when I went into the corner too fast, I downshifted and it just wobbled. I felt I was out of control. And I ditched the bike. Like I said, I went into a ditch and let it go.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Ya know,

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: I slid fooorrrr, I was probably doing about 40 some miles an hour and uhm, my bike, I just saw my bike being smashed up and I was just crossing my fingers. I got up. I made sure all my limbs were still there.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Cause, I've had accidents. I've broken my wrist, I did that snowboarding. Mountain biking I dislocated fingers and things like that. You don't know that you did it. Your body protects that.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: So, I just got up and made sure that I was in one piece. I got up; my bike was lying next to a telephone pole. No one stops. I mean, cars just kept going.

SUSAN: Oh my!

GARY: A guy came out of, of course, a chiropractic office, came running out.

SUSAN: Chuckle

GARY: I think I was 26 or 27 at the time. He's going, "hey are you alright?" And I'm like yah, but I need to get my bike up. Laugh. I wanted to make sure it was alright and could run. And it was just totaled.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: I did about \$3,500 worth of damage to it and then the guy that came to pick it up, he's supposed to bring a flat bed. He brought a tow truck.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: He goes, "Oh I've done this before." He strapped it up. The chain dug into the gas tank and the frame and totaled the rest of the bike. The bike was a total loss after he did that.

SUSAN: Yah

GARY: And they actually had to pay for that part.

SUSAN: Oh wow.

GARY: Yah, so that was the only accident I had. Like I said, I went and got another bike shortly after and then things snapped. It took a while for that to get into my head. You know, I looked at it like, hey, I'm young. I survived that one, let's go. You know?

SUSAN: Right

GARY: Chuckle, so,

SUSAN: It's interesting how there was a little bit of a time delay. I mean, you had some time to contemplate.

GARY: Yah, it did get into my head that this isn't for me right now. So...

SUSAN: Right, so then you did the Corvette, but then when you heard everyone else on their bikes, you wanted to get out again?

GARY: Yah, I raced. I'd go to the track and race it. So, I actually get on a track and legally can race on the tracks. You know?

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: I did that with the car. I went to IRP and did the stretch and stuff.

SUSAN: And, can I ask how old you are now?

GARY: I'm 43.

SUSAN: Okay, so you have a long history of these things.

GARY: Yah, I mean, I can ride. I'm 43 and I'm probably the only guy who can ride on the back wheel down the road. Because I mean, I grew up on it. Yah, I don't do that out on the highway. I'll do it like on a back street or somewhere where there's no...

SUSAN: Way out in the country?

GARY: Right

SUSAN: Okay, so, most of your history, are you an Indiana native? Did you do a lot of this riding here?

GARY: Yah

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: And I consider this a non-riding place. I think it's dangerous. You know, there's just so much traffic and people just don't pay attention or anything. My riding now is limited. I like 74. So, I'll get on 74 because there's not a lot of traffic and then I'll head over on one of the side roads, whatever it is, out there. I take a little route out there. I go to a Mexican restaurant. I think it's over by Plainfield.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

GARY: A car wash, a Mexican restaurant, and I don't know the road. I just get on there and ride. It's past the Lebanon exit, I think.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

GARY: It's one of those. I just go on those back roads. I still have to watch out on the back roads.

SUSAN: Yah

GARY: If there is a straightaway and nothing, then I'm moving. But, other than that, I ride really safe. Probably people are like, "why is he on a sport bike just puttin' around?" But, most of the Ducati riders do.

SUSAN: That's very interesting. I mean, ever person I talk to gives me so much valuable information. I mean, I'll probably go on researching this. Motorcycle riders are so multi-faceted. But, the Harley people, I'd say most of them hate the idea of having a helmet on. They'll just fight it to the death. But now, you're telling me the Ducati group primarily does wear the helmet.

GARY: 100%. You won't go to an event and see someone ride up without a helmet. I can tell you, you will not. You're actually looked at as an idiot. People will shun you off if you don't come (show up with a helmet). And, even if you don't come with gear on, you're kinda weak, you're not in the "in-crown" and the "in-crowd" is being safe". With the Ducati riders, that is not with the Japanese riders, you know, you're not gonna see that.

SUSAN: I'm finding out about these different groups.

GARY: Now I do see some Japanese riders wearing full gear, and again, I think there's a cost factor there too.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

GARY: So...I'm sure if the equipment was affordable, you'd see more riders wearing gear. But, you know, if you went and shopped for gear, you're not going to get in a suit, or leathers and tough denim for under \$500, I don't think. At least it's not going to be, you know, all these have armor (gives to me to feel). All of these have armor in them.

SUSAN: Yah, that probably stands up by itself. I can feel how strong it is.

GARY: Yes, the jacket's very, very heavy.

SUSAN: Uh hmm. It is. Very good to know. I'm happy to know that there is at least a large group out there that is concerned about this.

GARY: Yah, we're very safety oriented. Even when we ride out on the highway, we won't do over 80 mph. There's no, people I ride with, that's just about as people are going to go, if that. You know, most bikes run, whether it's Harley or whatever, they're running about 80 out on the open highway.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: I'd say that would be the average speed, which is 4th gear for me. Chuckle.

SUSAN: Wow, that's powerful.

GARY: That bike I've got is probably one of the fastest bikes out there. It will, the front end will raise off in 3rd gear, which most bikes, you don't have that kind of power in them.

SUSAN: Um hmm

GARY: Even the big CC bikes. That one is known for its power.

SUSAN: Well then, as you are saying this, I am thinking, "it's a really good thing that someone with as much experience as you buys a bike like that." I would hope people would work up to that.

GARY: Oh well, no. A lot of people won't even ride that bike. Even, I have friends that come and most of them ride Monster, it's called a Monster, and it's kind of a naked sport bike. They won't hop on my bike. A lot of people won't get on that bike. Even a Harley rider would not get on a bike like that. Chuckle. Actually, I'm still scared of that one.

SUSAN: Oh?

GARY: I had, again, one of the biggest production sport bikes and I really wasn't scared of that one, just the way it ran. This one has unseen power. And, it's very light weight. So, it weighs less than 400 pounds.

SUSAN: You still have a healthy respect for it.

GARY: Yah, it's got 178 horsepower. You know, at the back wheel, so you look at some of your midsize cars have 124 horse power and they weigh, and they weigh about 3,000 pounds with about 124 horse power. So, there is a respect. Chuckle

SUSAN: Yah, I would say so. So then, my last question is, you mention that sometimes you Google for information, but, if you can think of media, in any form, whether it's pop culture, to movies and television shows, or to the newscasters and how they cover anything about a motorcycle event, do you have any opinions about media coverage and motorcycle riders?

GARY: I do like Nicky Hayden, which is kind of the Indiana, well, he's from Kentucky, but all the Indiana riders like him.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Cause he races on the moto GP.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: And he uh, wrecked and wasn't able to do it this year.

SUSAN: Is he that one? Oh, okay.

GARY: Yah, he wrecked and knocked himself out.

SUSAN: Right at the very beginning.

GARY: Yah, in the test. Now he comes out to our group. We sponsor some things for him and all the Ducati riders. I'll send you the email link so you can go to our site.

SUSAN: I would love that.

GARY: And you'll see, if you go out and look at the pictures and stuff, you'll see the demographic of riders and stuff.

SUSAN: Very good!

GARY: It's kind of neat. Uhm, Nicky Hayden did some commercials on safe riding.

SUSAN: Uh huh?

GARY: Recently, we had one of our riders, a lady pulled out in from of him and he was killed instantly and we all rode out to his funeral. So, we are a tight group.

SUSAN: Um Hmm

GARY: So, if someone gets hurt, there is, everybody supports everybody in the group. I've been riding with a group since 2009 and that's the first time I've heard of a death in the group. And, I don't know what the circumstances were. I would not be riding the road, that that gentleman was riding.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GARY: Maybe he had to because he lived over there. But, I think it was Shadeland or somewhere over there. I think it was Shadeland. I stay; you will rarely see me driving downtown. I had a friend who was hit downtown, and then, he was robbed.

SUSAN: Oh no!

GARY: Yah, he was knocked out and unconscious. A drunk driver hit him. And, when he was out, people around him just robbed him, of his shoes, his watch and wallet, and let him just set there. So, I don't even go there.

SUSAN: That is a horrible story. I'm from Chicago, and I also spend quite a few years in Phoenix. I just didn't think of Indianapolis being that cruel. But, I guess it can be.

GARY: No! I know! Laugh

SUSAN: That's really awful!

GARY: That's the worst thing I've ever heard in my life. But, I don't see a lot of stuff on TV about safety or anything. But, like I said, Nicky Hayden got out there and he does some commercials on safe riding, which I respect.

SUSAN: Alright

GARY: And of course, he's a sport bike rider, so he's not targeting, I don't think his message is targeting Harley riders, or anything. Where you have more of those riders out there and you see more accidents with those types of bikes.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: Most of your accidents with the sport bikes, they're young kids testing the power of the bike.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: You know.

SUSAN: I wonder, because we talked about the cost involved for the younger people, is there any type of a program, that like, when you buy this nice helmet, what do you do with your old helmet? If it wasn't stolen or it wasn't ruined, and you still have it, is there any type of a program that's like a trade in program?

GARY: No, but that's probably a good idea, that'd be an awesome idea. I sold it for \$25 in a garage sale. So someone got a benefit out of it.

SUSAN: Right!

GARY: You know, if they don't want to have it, then someone else has got a helmet.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: There's a lady at work who rides a sport bike and I would have given it to her because hers is defective. But, you know, it just went in the garage sale. But, that would be a good idea if you would have a place where

people could donate their used gear. A great idea, because I've got tons of gear just sitting in closets. And, you can't get rid of it.

SUSAN: Right. Of the reasons that I am interested in this is because they say that by the year 2020, globally, motorcycle vehicle accidents will be the 3rd leading cause of death. If it is the cost that is keeping people from protecting themselves, is there some way that we can level the playing field to help them out?

GARY: I know that was a factor for me when I was younger. I didn't wear a helmet. I didn't wear the gear. There was just no way. I was a college student. Of course, my motorcycle payment was real cheap, you know, when you finance something.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: Maybe it was only 3 or 4,000. But..

SUSAN: Then you have the cost of your apartment, and food..

GARY: Right. And that was almost a daily rider for me. This is not a commuting device. It doesn't even have a back seat on it, so it isn't made for two people. It's more something like a jet ski.

SUSAN: I appreciate that because my father was one of those people who was into every sport. So, being around him, one of my thrills in life is being on a fast boat.

GARY: Right!

SUSAN: I love being on the water and going fast, so I understand that.

GARY: Yah, I've owned jet skis, boats. I've owned just about any device that you can go fast on. Snow boarded out in Colorado. I mean, my whole life, I've always been kind of a risk taker. But I won't let someone else pack my parachute. I'm not going to do things like that, or if someone else has control.

SUSAN: Right

GARY: I did do the Indy Car Experience where they take you around the track 4 times in an Indy car...

SUSAN: Uh huh..

GARY: And, that, even having someone doing that, an experienced drive, having someone else take you around. I wouldn't do that again. At 100 or 200 miles an hour, no.

SUSAN: What about airplanes? I mean, flying fast airplanes.

GARY: Oh yah, I'd do it. I would do a jet ride, if it came up. If someone said, "Hey, do you want to go take a ride?" I was in the military, so I was in aircraft, helicopters and stuff, but not a jet. But, I wasn't in a jet.

SUSAN: Right. So, when were you in the military?

GARY: Right out of high school, and up until I graduate college.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: After Desert Storm and all that, I was being deployed, again. And, I was like, "okay, I'm done. I put my time in for my country. I'm done." I thought that I might not be here.

SUSAN: I'm glad that you offered that. I was going to ask, because I have had quite a few folks who responded to my study who were most military. And, a lot

of them have gone to the Harley because of the “American made” connotation.

GARY: I’m surprised my neighbor hasn’t been one of them. Have you interviewed another gentleman from Brownsburg?

SUSAN: No, I don’t think so.

GARY: He rides a Triumph.

SUSAN: No

GARY: My neighbor was in the army or the air force. He rides something similar to my bike. A Triumph is also an overseas bike.

SUSAN: No, I haven’t met him yet.

GARY: But, he’s at IUPUI, so.

SUSAN: Okay

GARY: I was out looking through the announcements. I saw, survey about motorcycles, why not.

SUSAN: Yah! I appreciate it because, I don’t know why this grabs my attention. I’ve never been interested in motorcycle riding myself. But, from articles I have read within Health Communication, it seems that there is a problem with riders wanting to wear helmets for protection. So, I appreciate you and the other riders sharing all your thoughts on riding so I can learn more about why this is so.

GARY: Right

SUSAN: The instance of Beth Rothlisberger having an accident made me wonder why someone would jeopardize their career, their income or their lives.

GARY: You know what, the gear may save me. But, a lot of times I’m thinkin’ I’m dead. I’m dead. You know, at speeds that you would be going, 55, 60, maybe even 70, you’re dead on a road. Because, on a road, there are obstacles. There are signs, mile markers, there are all those things. Those are the things that I am scared of because if you’re going to go down, you’re going to slide for a couple hundred feet or so, or roll. When I went down, I braced myself and I went with the flow. I didn’t have a helmet on. I didn’t have any protection on, and I survived it. Actually, I had just got out of the gym and it was so cold. I couldn’t see with my helmet on. So, I took the helmet off so I could actually see.

SUSAN: Oh, uh huh..

GARY: There’s was so much steam coming off my body. So, I look at it this way. If I go down, which I’d say the chances on the highway are pretty slim, unless something, you hit something, debris, or something that would cause you to crash. I don’t think you would survive what you might hit. It would decapitate you, or knock something off of you and you’d bleed out. (Quiet for a moment, then chuckles.) The nice things you think about! I do think about them. (laughter).

SUSAN: I know

GARY: That’s what keeps me staying at a certain level of speed. My bike will do up to 200 miles an hour. It’s not going to see 200 miles an hour, at least, on a road. On a track, I get it up to about 160 – 165. Laugh.

SUSAN: But, you think about death?

GARY: Yah, you do.
 SUSAN: And you do it anyway.
 GARY: Yah
 SUSAN: In calculated ways
 GARY: Yah. This'll be my last one though. I'm done after this one. Laughs.
 SUSAN: Okay.. but you're still pretty young. I could see you doing this another 20 years.
 GARY: That's possible. Yah. That's possible. Yah.
 SUSAN: Do you have kids that you worry about?
 GARY: Yah. My son is going on 18. Now, I won't let him get a bike.
 SUSAN: Oh
 GARY: And even my own mother, I had to hide this from her in my 40s. Laughs.
 SUSAN: OK, yah, I can understand.
 GARY: Yah, there are those factors. But, do I dwell on those things? I guess I might be selfish. I live for some things I want out of life. I've got good insurance and he can go to school and not worry about it. Laughs.
 SUSAN: I understand that.
 GARY: I could live in a hole.
 SUSAN: But, we're here to live?
 GARY: Right.
 SUSAN: Well, any other comments that you think are relevant, or that you'd like to share?
 GARY: No, just that I do think you have a good idea about some type of organization that would, I work in the nonprofit industry. So, you always think of how you can help others out. That would be a good idea to donate used riding gear to something, to get it out to younger people to help them be safe.
 SUSAN: I think I'd maybe like to collect it and sell it, for a small amount of money. Just enough to keep the organization going.
 GARY: The thing is, it's tough when you buy something, there's the sizes and the different things. It would be so hard to collect enough to make an impact. I might be wrong. And then, there a lot of a cleanliness factor. If you wore something and sweat in it, I mean...
 SUSAN: Right. Well even just with helmets, I wonder if any of the cleaning organizations, would donate service.
 GARY: Right, 'cause again, I wouldn't take a used helmet that someone sweat in for a number of years. Mine, that I got rid of, was practically new, so I felt good about selling it. I probably only wore it a couple of times before I got this.
 SUSAN: Right. I will have to look into how effective a steam cleaner would be to make a used helmet nicer.
 GARY: Right. But, I've got a helmet at home that is still in the casing and everything. I don't know what to do with it.
 SUSAN: Well, hang onto it! Until I can look into this.
 GARY: Yah, I think that would be a good idea. If someone was given something, possibly that would help.

SUSAN: Thanks again
GARY: You're welcome.

Interview 13 and 14: Conrad Jackson, later joined by fiancé, Leslie

9/13/12

Male, 56, Female, 50

(Recited the IRB stipulations to the subject)

SUSAN: With that in mind, do I have your permission to go ahead with the interview?

Conrad: Absolutely

SUSAN: OK, thank you.

CONRAD: Absolutely

SUSAN: So, first question is: if you could just tell me how you got started. What created the interest in motorcycles?

CONRAD: What created the interest in motorcycle riding? Well, I've always been intrigued with anything has wheels and goes around. You know, bicycles and that kind of thing. But, when I was 9 years old, I went to a yard sale. Some neighbors were having a yard sale. I wouldn't say exactly neighbors, but you know, three or four blocks away.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: I went to this yard sale and here sat a little Honda 50 cub, completely dismantled.

SUSAN: Wow

CONRAD: Piled into a box. And I was like all intrigued by this thing. You know, a little 9 year old looking in this box, peering in and seeing all these parts and pieces and different stuff. And it's like woooooowwww. You know, it was the coolest thing to me.

SUSAN: Wow! Yah.

CONRAD: So, I asked him how much it was. The guy told me, "For you I'll sell it to ya for 7 bucks." I said, "really?" So I went home, dug into my piggy bank. I pulled out 7 bucks. I grabbed my wagon, and down I went.

SUSAN: Aawww

CONRAD: And I bought that box of stuff. (Chuckle) The wheels were separate from the bike. The frame was completely separate. The motor was completely dismantled and apart. I had no idea if I had all the parts or not...

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Or what was what. It was just, "by golly, I got a motorcycle!" And I was excited. (Laugh)

SUSAN: Was it, there were wheels, okay

CONRAD: So, I brought it home. And, my mom met me as I was pulling it up the driveway. (Laugh) And I said (all excited) Mom! I bought it at a garage sale. Can I keep it? And she was the look on my face. And she looked at that motorcycle and she said, "Sure Honey. You can have that." She was thinkin' that's gonna keep that kid busy aaallllll summer long and then some. You know.

SUSAN: Laugh. Pretty smart of her!

CONRAD: And so, it kept me busy. But, to her surprise, I had that thing running in about a month. Now, I had a couple cousins, and uncle, who were

motorcycle people. So they helped me. We got that thing together and I was riding it all over the place. Chuckle.

SUSAN: Oh, my gosh!

CONRAD: And, they taught me how to ride. And that was it. So, at nine years old, I was on my own with my first motorcycle that I had built.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: And I've been building motorcycles my whole life.

SUSAN: Oh my gosh!

CONRAD: And I'm 59 years old now. So, and I've had 100s of motorcycles.

SUSAN: So, your cousins and your uncle were there from that early age.

CONRAD: Yup

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: My uncles had, they were raised up in northern Wisconsin. Up by, a little area called Hayward.

SUSAN: Uh huh, I know it.

CONRAD: That's where my mom and her family were from. They had six siblings who lived on 280 acres that they had up there. My uncles all had motorcycles. They had old Indians and Harley Davidsons back then. That was back in the 1920s and 1930s and stuff. So, there have been motorcycles in our lives ever since..

SUSAN: Always

CONRAD: Uh huh, day one. For us as kids, all my cousins and everyone, we all ended up to be Harley Davidson riders.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Over the years.

SUSAN: That would be another question. Since you said that you always have had them, and building them and so forth, one my questions to people usually is what can you tell me you drive now, tell me about if you bought it used or you purchased it. But, not you probably have a lot of experiences to talk about.

CONRAD: Oh yah. I've had lots of different motorcycles. I've bought used. I've bought new. I've actually had motorcycles that were built for me by the factory. Huska Varna, when they first came out with a 400 crosser, which was an open cross motorcycle to race motocross with

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: They would build a motorcycle to my specifications and to my size and everything, so I could ride it.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Professionally, that is.

SUSAN: Okay. That means that you are someone who has experience in different categories. You have motocross, you mentioned Harley Davidson, different styles completely.

CONRAD: As far as riding and racing, I've got trials experience. I have induro riding, uhm motocross TT riding, which is where you ride on a flat track that has some jumps and stuff on it.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.
 CONRAD: Most of my riding was done in the mid to late 60s, early 70s.
 SUSAN: Okay
 CONRAD: And then in the 80s I was into what is known as endures, where we would ride like a 150 to 200 mile race.
 SUSAN: Uh hmm
 CONRAD: Where, it's just roped off with a..you have a few turns and it's flagged with a little piece of tape, you know, bright tape or something like that. So, you'd know that when you get to this area, you'd know that you have to turn to this direction and away you go.
 SUSAN: So, it's on a course, not a track.
 CONRAD: It' on a course, but it's like 150 mile course. So, a lot of the riding I would do, cause I lived in Northern California at the time, would be in Nevada, Northern California, that kind of thing. You'd just be out in the wilderness there. I mean, you're on your own in the middle of nowhere.
 SUSAN: Yah! Pause. So, you're riding most recently, what kind of bike?
 CONRAD: Most recently what I do now is I ride a big fat couch down the road. Laugh.
 SUSAN: Laugh, which is the Harley...
 CONRAD: Right, which is the Harley. My fiancé and I both have Harley Davidson.
 SUSAN: Uh huh?
 CONRAD: She has a Fatboy, a '98 Fatboy that we bought used. That when it sold brand new was about \$18,000. We bought it with 18,000 miles on it and paid \$8,500 for it, which is a really, really good deal.
 SUSAN: Nice!
 CONRAD: Second owner. So it was a really, really good deal. And then I have what's known as a mini Fatboy right now. And that is a sportster that I have rebuilt and changed the whole style of the motorcycle and turned it into a mini Fatboy.
 SUSAN: Okay
 CONRAD: A sportster is a smaller displacement motor, a 1200 CC motor. Her motor (the fiancé) was a 1340 CC.
 SUSAN: Uh huh
 CONRAD: My motor now is probably a little over 1500 and it's 120 horsepower. And hers, stock is about 65 horsepower.
 SUSAN: Okay
 CONRAD: So, but what I did to mine is that I changed the gas tank on it. I changed the seats. I have 5 different seats for it that I could change. I have great big bags on it. I changed the whole front end, and put a wide glide front end on the motorcycle.
 SUSAN: Uh hummm
 CONRAD: It has Fatboy fenders and everything. I ride with people all day long and they have no idea that it wasn't even a Fatboy, other than it's very loud and it's very fast.
 SUSAN: Okay, and is it the type that there is a windshield on it?
 CONRAD: Yah

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Yah, windshield and big running lights and everything else. It's a big cruiser type of motorcycle.

SUSAN: Okay, and have you bought most of them used?

CONRAD: No, that motorcycle I bought brand new. I've had numerous motorcycles that I've bought brand new. After I raced motocross and stuff, and outgrew it, then I started..I have a V45 Honda, which was a 740 that I bought new.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: That was in the mid-1980s. I had a 1980 850 Yamaha which is a 3 cylinder motorcycle that Yamaha built back then. I bought that brand new, at the time.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: I've had three different Harley Davidsons before that which I had bought brand new. I had a '92 Fatboy.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: And then the motorcycle that I have now, started out as a sportster that I actually bought for one of my old girlfriends and I built a matching set of twins. In 1992 they came out with a color that was bright orange and cream.

SUSAN: Oh?

CONRAD: It was the only year that they made that color. And I really just fell in love with it. Uh, orange, cream and black, something about that just goes together really well.

SUSAN: Yah,

CONRAD: So, I built a matching set of twins. That's how it ended up to be a mini Fatboy. Cause I had the big Fatboy and the mini Fatboy.

SUSAN: Uh huh.

CONRAD: And I have a bad back after riding motocross for so many years.

SUSAN: Yah

CONRAD: I'm two inches shorter that I used to be because I have compressed discs in every vertebra in my back. I've had back surgeries and foot surgeries and my knees are bad, (chuckle). I've paid my price for falling off motorcycles.

SUSAN: No doubt

CONRAD: Never been in an accident on a motorcycle that wasn't my fault other than in racing.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: That kind of thing. But, on the street, I've never had a problem.

SUSAN: Okay. So, I guess when I was asking about your purchase behaviors one of the things I ask about in that situation is if the dealership tries to also sell you safety gear. Do they care about that? Or, are they just trying to sell the motorcycle?

CONRAD: Well, the number one factor is you're asking me what does the dealer offer you when you buy a motorcycle.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: Well, they're gonna look at your experience. They're pretty much going to be able to tell how well you know motorcycles and what's going on, just by the questions you're gonna be asking and confidence that you show when you test ride a motorcycle, and the things that you do. That's the first thing that they're going to ask you. Have you ridden before? How long have you been riding? What have you owned before? What are you getting what you're getting? So, they're pretty well educated on working with people.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: The dealers that I have found, and have dealt with have always been that way. I kinda see more so now that dealers are doing that. I would never buy a brand new motorcycle now, especially a Harley Davidson because they're in the \$20,000 range.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: Where you can buy used, you know, five or ten years old, and cut the motorcycle price in half, if not more.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: So, let somebody else pay that depreciation.

SUSAN: Right, I know.

CONRAD: I do the same thing on cars, too.

SUSAN: Well I understand. I've only bought one car brand new.

CONRAD: Yah

SUSAN: I guess I am thinking more recently, like in the past 10 years, when you're out riding, who are you out riding with. Do you belong to groups?

CONRAD: Ummm..I have in the past. I belonged to, when I lived in Northern California, I belonged to quite a few different..well, I can't say I was a member of the club. But, a lot of outlaw clubs that I used to ride with..

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: I was good friends with everybody. So, I got along with everybody.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: All the different types of clubs. I've ridden with the Hell's Angels. I've ridden with many, many, I'm not even to go into the names of the clubs.

SUSAN: Uh huh, a lot.

CONRAD: I made a point to get along with everybody. So, I didn't have any problems in that aspect.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: This is Leslie. (Calls fiancé, who is also a motorcycle rider, joins the meeting).

SUSAN: Hi Leslie, nice to meet you! Thanks for joining us.

LESLIE: Thank you

SUSAN: I was just saying that I am working on my master's in health communication and organizational communication. My mentor is a traffic safety specialist. She works mostly with teenagers and their driving. But, for some reason, after reading an article about motorcycle riders and,

although I have never had an interest in riding myself, it seemed like something I wanted to look into.

LESLIE: Good

SUSAN: And now that I have begun, I am finding that it's such a diverse group of people, that I think I need to speak with each of them face to face. Big quantitative studies might not be the best way to find out about their habits.

LESLIE: Yah

SUSAN: So, I'm learning. In fact, I've had so many interviews now, I can actually understand what you're talking about with the different types.

CONRAD: The different types, like the cruiser and so forth.

SUSAN: So, Conrad, it sounds like you're a people person, so if there was a group around, you would just go with the flow?

CONRAD: Right, I would go with the flow. Now days, you know, LESLIE and I ride together probably more so than anything else. We don't spend as much time around people.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Uh, probably as we used to. We live a private life at home because we have so many people here at work, and LESLIE has a pretty prestigious job, so we don't have a lot of friends that we hang out with. We like our privacy at home.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Now we do have friends, you know, a few friends, we'll get together and we'll go for a ride, that kind of thing.

SUSAN: Yes

CONRAD: Usually once or twice a year we'll get involved with something like the Miracle Ride..

SUSAN: Yes, I've heard of that.

CONRAD: Or, some kind of a benefit type of thing. LESLIE doesn't really like to ride as much in a big crowd.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: She'd rather it be just the two of us. She's happy riding, if we're gonna go out on the Miracle Ride, we'll take one bike and then she'll ride on the back.

SUSAN: I've heard that from a lot of people. Because there are some people who are very experienced, but when you are in that big crowd you're not sure if everyone is going to know what they're doing.

CONRAD: Right, you have to know how to read people and know what's going to happen. You need experience riding in a crowd.

LESLIE: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Because you never know that that next person is going to do to you. You've never seen them. You've never met 'em. You know, when you're riding right alongside somebody, three feet, right next to 'em on the road, and then you're looking at a line of a thousand motorcycles and you've got some guy in front of you, and some guy right behind you, you know, and there's always going to be somebody who's horsing around a little bit.

You never know what's going to happen. Are they paying attention? Are they not paying attention? Are they gonna slam on the brakes, swerve, or do some kind of thing?

SUSAN: Yah, sounds like a good cause, but it might be a little stressful.

CONRAD: It can be. If you're used to it, it's not so bad. You have to have faith in people but be cautious about them at the same time. Laugh.

SUSAN: Laugh, right! That brings me to what you mentioned about road driving and accidents. You haven't been in an accident that you caused on the road, but what about ones that other people caused when you've been on the road?

CONRAD: I have been around people who have driven off the road.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: I've been with people that have been hit by cars, and stuff. I've never been hit, myself. I have learned, I guess, from seeing other mistakes. I've learned by my racing background, and spent so much time on the road, I care where I position myself.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: More so by experience of knowing what is safer. I ask what would be the best thing for me. How do I know that driver is going to see me? When a person first gets a motorcycle they are a little intimidated. So, they're going to be off to the right hand side of the road. You know, if you're going down the road, with cars, most of the time, they're going to be going a little bit slow, a little bit nervous, so they're going to be on the right hand side, so they think they have a place to bale over there.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Which is actually one of the worst places that they can be because they're not visible. The people that they are behind can't see them there. They're not looking to the right side mirror to see what's behind them. If they go to make a right hand turn, they're going to look in that mirror, but they're always watching down the left hand side mirror, you know?

SUSAN: Yah

CONRAD: They're looking in the rearview mirror and the left mirror.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: That's what the person driving is paying attention to, unless they're going to turn right, then, they'll look in that other mirror. So, most of the time they are not going to see that guy who is off to the right hand side. Does that make sense?

SUSAN: Yes, and I am also thinking that I've heard a lot of people say that when they have been in accidents, it was someone making a left hand turn in front of them. I can see that if you were driving a car, coming from the other direction, the car might block the visibility of the person in the right hand lane.

CONRAD: Exactly. No I ride down the center of the road. I position my headlight in the car's rearview mirror, or side mirror. So I know that my light is going to bounce off the mirror and hit that person in the face and it's going to

bug them so where I see them turn their head and look in the mirror. Then I know that they know that I am there.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Then I back off a little bit and then I make sure that they look in their rearview mirror and notice that I am there. That way I know that they have seen me and know that I am there.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Also, if I know that I am on the left hand side, someone who may be coming up to pass a drive that is behind me.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: Is going to see me right there too. Because, if you're in that far right hand lane, and somebody is passing somebody that is behind you, they don't even know you are there at all. They're going to come and the next thing you know, you're pinched off the road.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Also with oncoming traffic, if you're in the right hand side of the road, oncoming traffic don't see you whatsoever. So, I get up on the side. The very first thing, they're going to be seeing my headlight out there, right next to, laugh, they're going to think I'm riding right next to the guy because I'll ride right in the center of the road.

SUSAN: I see. I never heard that before. That's a good strategy. I mean, I've heard a lot of strategies, but I do understand that.

CONRAD: It's the safer place to be, believe it or not.

SUSAN: So, in terms of gear, what do you use to protect yourself?

CONRAD: Helmets. We always wear helmets, no matter what. I was raised in an area where helmets were mandatory, so we always wore them.

SUSAN: California?

CONRAD: Yah, Canada and California

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: It just makes sense. Laugh. You know, now I have to say I have a little brain bucket that probably wouldn't protect me from much of anything. But, I do have a helmet.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Uh, most accidents that you're gonna see on motorcycles, for riders, unless I got seriously hit by somebody coming from the side, or you know, a mistake of some car driver or something, is gonna be small. You're going to fall over at five miles an hour, ten miles an hour.

SUSAN: Okay?

CONRAD: That's where you are least stable is when you are maneuvering around slowly on a motorcycle.

SUSAN: Yah?

CONRAD: Centrifugal force isn't with you at that point.

SUSAN: Right. So, do you always wear long jeans or leather?

CONRAD: Yah.

SUSAN: Boots, and...

CONRAD: Yah, always wear boots. Gloves are a must.

SUSAN: Okay, well,
 LESLIE: (softly in background says, "uh uh.")
 CONRAD: Laughs, except one time. Laugh.
 LESLIE: You rode my bike without a helmet.
 CONRAD: Laugh, I rode LESLIE's motorcycle one time. I needed to run to the post office, which is a mile away. I had shorts on. Tennis shoes.
 SUSAN: Uh huh
 CONRAD: It was hot. It was like 90 something degrees and I thought, "I'm just running up to the post office, no big deal." And, I think the scar has gone away now. Laugh. (Cal looks at the inside of his calf and laughs more.)
 SUSAN: Everyone tells me about that! (Talking about the burn one gets on their inside calf because of a hot exhaust pipe.
 CONRAD: But, I have burned myself because I didn't have my long pants, ya know?
 SUSAN: I've heard that everybody does it once, and then you remember not to do that again.
 CONRAD: Right
 LESLIE: People who ride on the back can get burned too.
 SUSAN: So you had one too?
 LESLIE: That's right.
 SUSAN to
 LESLIE: So you started riding when you were 8. Looking at CONRAD, you were a California Canadian guy. Looking at LESLIE, now what about you?
 LESLIE: I was raised here in Indiana.
 CONRAD: Do you want her to come over here?
 SUSAN: Yah! Thanks.
 LESLIE: Okay
 SUSAN: I do have some women in my study. But, I find it interesting that you said that you started when you were a child.
 LESLIE: Yah
 SUSAN: What influenced you?
 LESLIE: My brother got a motorcycle for his 7th birthday.
 SUSAN: Oh, okay
 LESLIE: And I was 8. Laugh. So we argued over the bike until my dad decided to get a 2nd one so we wouldn't kill each other.
 SUSAN: Chuckle, okay
 LESLIE: And, we just started riding motorcycles. Then, my parents started riding with us. And then we actually, I'm from a small town, so we got to ride with our parents, through town and out through the country roads. So, we were able to ride on the road at an early age.
 CONRAD: These are smaller dirt bikes that she is talking about.
 SUSAN: Right. Okay. So, did you always then keep riding? Or, did you stop for a while and then pick it up again?
 LESLIE: Stopped when my kids were getting to their teens because I was divorced. And, I didn't think having a motorcycle in the garage while I was away

working. 25 miles away, was going to be a good idea with two teenage boys.

SUSAN: Uh huh, you can't trust them.

LESLIE: Laugh! No, not two teenage boys.

SUSAN: Okay, and did you always wear a helmet?

LESLIE: Yes, and I have a "good" helmet. He does too, but he just wears the other one.

SUSAN: Okay

LESLIE: They have to be DOT and Schnell approved.

CONRAD: There's a difference between DOT and Schell, too.

SUSAN: I have been reading about that as well.

CONRAD: Uh huh

SUSAN: And someone let me pick up their Ari helmet a couple weeks ago. He said it cost \$1,000. But it was as light as a feather. I was very surprised.

CONRAD and
LESLIE:

Uh huh

LESLIE: Now some of them are heavy. Ours is fairly light. My full face helmet is heavy.

CONRAD: We probably have 8 helmets between the two of us. Uhm, LESLIE has 6 seats for her bike. I have 5 seats for my bike. There's different types of seats and bags, and different types of stuff that we add. Take on, take off depending upon where we are going and what we're doing.

SUSAN: Okay

CONRAD: Helmets are important, the quality of a helmet.

SUSAN to
LESLIE: Have you been in an accident?

LESLIE: MMMM, not on the street. No road rash. Laugh. I've had a few bikes coming over the top of me, and, I've gotten hurt a few times, but that's always been in the woods.

SUSAN: Okay. So, the other thing I ask people is, if you can think of how motorcycles or motorcycle riding is depicted in the media, whether it is pop culture, movies, television, the way the news people talk about it, do have any opinions?

LESLIE: In movies it's the glamour of riding. There's really no glamor. It's just fun.

SUSAN: Uh huh.

CONRAD: I think there is a lot of way of life that is depicted that people don't really understand. Ya know, people like to pick out the bad boy type of thing, the negative type that is a druggie, tough-guy thug. It was that way for a long time. You know, through the 70s, the 80s, you know. The 90s I think started changing all that. Because you had more people in the 40 to 50 year old range that now are earning pretty good money. The economy was booming at that time. These guys were able to, they're getting older in age, they never had motorcycles, they never had stuff, but now all of the sudden they've got money because they're making money on houses,

they're making money on all this stuff that they bought cheap through the years. So, now, they can afford a \$20,000 toy.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: So, having a Harley Davison in the 90s was kind like a status symbol. It was like, hey I can afford a \$20,000 toy! I bought a motorhome and I got this and I got that. So, they would get these motorcycles and a lot of these people came from Viet Nam, had military buddies and stuff like that. Or, they had buddies who had come back and were riders, and they were talked into it by their friends to go riding with them. But, they could afford these fancy motorcycles. So, that is when a lot of the image of bikers changed, was in the 90s. I think the image of motorcycle riders are changing quite a bit now. Because, more people are seeing the benefits from what a lot of the (charity) rides are doing. Organized, sanctioned rides, that kind of thing. Most of the clubs, I mean, even some of the bad boy clubs, most of the bad boy clubs that I hung out with, did more charity work than anything else. They would help burn unit kids. They would all pick charities that they would help out. Everywhere I've ever been, there is always a Christmas toy run for kids in the hospital.

SUSAN: Hmmm...

CONRAD: Ya know..And every single group gets involved in that. I don't care who, every run or event when there is a toy run for kids, toys for tots, toys for ...

SUSAN: It's sort of unifying

LESLIE: Yes

CONRAD: It's really happening.

LESLIE: I don't think the media, movies, TV, news, I mean, the only time you really ever see about news is if somebody is doing something that is for a charity, or somebody got killed on one. But, I don't think the media picks out the types of riders now. Like, right now I am dressed down. Usually I have pantyhose and a dress, but I didn't feel good this morning. Laugh. But, most people look at me and say, "You really don't ride a motorcycle." Our Chairman, for our department, when I first got here, we were going to ride in the Miracle Ride. I put out an email for everybody, if they wanted to give us a donation for Miracle Ride, you could give it to me. And, I had seen my chair and he's like, "seriously, you don't ride a motorcycle." I said, "yah." Like how big is it. I said, "well, it's a regular size, okay?" Laugh. And he just couldn't believe it. And he was actually at the ride. He didn't ride, but he saw me ride, so he knew I rode a motorcycle. But, I'm an accountant.

SUSAN: I see.

LESLIE: I have two degrees in accounting. I am a mom of two kids.

CONRAD: She weighs 100 and...

LESLIE: No I don't! I weigh more than that!!

CONRAD: Okay, 115

SUSAN: Laugh.

CONRAD: She rides a motorcycle that weighs almost 800 pounds.

SUSAN: Well, none of that surprises me. The part that surprises me is that you started as a child.

LESLIE: Right.

SUSAN: To me, that is something unique, based on the people I've spoken to.

LESLIE: Yah. Probably. I was the only girl that was riding at the time. We belonged to a motorcycle club. We started riding and some other friends of my parents had motorcycle and that's how my parents decided to ride.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LESLIE: And, then we had some real close friends who had a big woods. So they decided to have a motorcycle club. Every Saturday and Sunday everybody would go out these people's houses and we started making trails through the 20 acre woods.

SUSAN: I see.

LESLIE: Then more people came. So, it was like a big family, a huge family.

SUSAN: uh huh

LESLIE: Well, there wasn't that many kids. There were some boys that were friends of my brothers. They had motorcycles. So, their parents would bring them out and drop them off. I was the only young girl riding.

SUSAN: Okay

LESLIE: Now there were some women that rode. But, I was the only young girl.

CONRAD: Remember too that this was in the 70s. So, these motorcycles were just progressing into the market.

LESLIE: I don't think I knew anybody, and girl, that rode a motorcycle. None of my girlfriends did. Chuckle.

SUSAN: And I didn't either. I can recall being at forest preserve picnic with a bunch of people and a boy giving me a ride, very slowly, through the forest preserve. I thought, oh that's nice. But, I never had an interest in riding. I was pretty much of a feminist, but I guess I just wasn't interested. Maybe if I had some of my childhood friend would have had motorcycles in my subdivision, maybe I would have tried it.

LESLIE: Right.

CONRAD: Influence has a lot to do with it. Who you were raised with or around.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: That kind of stuff has a lot to do with it. You are what you know. Older siblings, or cousins, or uncles, can influence you.

SUSAN: Especially since you had help with your box of motorcycle parts! Laugh. And you've since graduated. You've had quite a few kind of motorcycles in the HD brand.

CONRAD: Yes, I've spent a lot of money on Harley Davidson. Davidson was sold out and was bought by AMF at one time. The quality of the motorcycles that AMF put out were not very good. They really knocked them down. They were competing against the Japanese Hondas, Yamahas and Kawasakis and stuff that had come out. I mean, Harley Davidson other than the Indians and a few other companies, they were the only American motorcycle that was on the market when the Japanese were just goin' to town, bringing all of these bikes and selling them somewhat cheaper.

SUSAN: Uh huh.

CONRAD: So, Harley Davidson took the Harley Davidson and cheapened it to try to compete with the Japanese bikes. The founders of Harley Davison, I guess not the original founders, but the family of Harley Davidson finally said, hey, let's buy this back and the mechanics, and everybody said let's take this back, and the mechanics and everybody said let's take this back, away from AMF and build a quality motorcycle.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: And change everything. In order to do that, they had to put it on the open market and offer the stock. Well, at the time, that stock sold for 30 cents a share. You know?

SUSAN: Yes

CONRAD: So anybody that was a Harley Davidson guy that could come up with \$1,000 and threw that in, and if you were somebody who had a little bit more money, you had \$10,000 and you stuck that in there at 30 cents a share... It's split now probably 6 or 7 times. Now it's selling for \$30-40-50 a share. These guys have made big bucks. I mean, all my cousins have made at least a half million off of Harley Davidson, easy.

SUSAN: That's good! I know that I've talked to a lot of military people who prefer the Harley. It seems to be that they are influenced when they are in the military. That is what they want when they come out, most of them I should say.

CONRAD: Harley has a very big "American" symbol.

SUSAN: Yes

CONRAD: American made. It's the American sound. It's that, something about a Harley Davidson. It's a wonderful motorcycle.

SUSAN: Um hmm

CONRAD: They build a very good product.

SUSAN: Now

CONRAD: It's meant to last.

SUSAN: It's good that they came back.

CONRAD: Oh yah. And through the years, it's just gotten better and better and better. All of the motorcycles have changed and gotten better and better and better.

SUSAN: Uh huh

CONRAD: Every single one of them. And, I wouldn't say Harley Davidson is any better than a Yamaha, than a Honda, than a new Victory is another bike that is built by Polaris.

SUSAN: Oh...

CONRAD: All kinds of wonderful motorcycles out there right now if you are buying in the new 2000 motorcycles.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: They're all top notch quality bikes. They've come a long way.

SUSAN: To LESLIE, And, I'm kind of also curious about, well, if you get looks being a woman, if you are out alone on a bike.

LESLIE: Not any more. At one point, yes, when I first, you know.

SUSAN: When you were real young?

LESLIE: Yah, I mean, gosh, the boys were 4 and 5, I think, when we started riding them on the back. But, at that age, if I was in my 20s, cause there wasn't that many women riders. Uhm, I'd get looks. Now there are so many women riders that people don't pay much attention.

CONRAD: She gets a lot of looks. She's got a pretty good body,

SUSAN and
LESLIE: Laugh

CONRAD: When you put her in leather, with the long, blond hair, laugh. A lot of the guys are going, "whoa".

SUSAN: I interviewed one woman, over the phone, so I don't what she looks like, but my first interview was a woman I used to work with. I describe her as someone who would look elegant on a red carpet. But, I have to admit that back in the 1970s, I might have expected a woman to be highly permed and covered with tattoos, and leather.

LESLIE: Laugh!

CONRAD: Tattoos are something else now days.

SUSAN: Yes

CONRAD: It used to be, yah, that tough motorcycle guys would have tattoos and everything, and now, you're finding more 15 to 20 year old girls have tattoos more so than the guys.

SUSAN: Right, there's a lot of art.

CONRAD: It's unbelievable. I don't see the fascination of tattoos.

SUSAN: Right. But, some of them are really pretty.

CONRAD: LESLIE as a tattoo, she has a little...

LESLIE: It's not little. It's kind of big. I have a Tweety Bird on my back.

SUSAN: OK, yah

LESLIE: It's real tough, chuckle.

SUSAN: Yes. I know. Something, I think is really pretty, but I wouldn't want that on me.

CONRAD: Yah!

SUSAN: When you are young, and you think of where you put it, do you think of what it's gonna look like in 40 years.

LESLIE: I didn't have mine done until I was like 35. Then I thought, "OK, now, where is the best place to put this?"

SUSAN: Right, where it's going to age well?

LESLIE: Age well, and if I want it seen, I can have it seen. If not, it's not. Shoulder blade seemed like safe place.

SUSAN: So, the thing that I am really curious about is helmets. You both said, "We wear helmets."

LESLIE: He is more apt to go without one than I will.

CONRAD: I don't really go without the helmet, but I wear the crappy helmet.

LESLIE: Laugh

SUSAN: The scap cap?

CONRAD: Yah, it's a \$30 piece of crap, and it's a psychological type thing.

LESLIE: I won't. It's just something...

CONRAD: If you hit a tree at 60 mph, I don't care what you're wearing, you're gonna be hurt.

SUSAN: Right

LESLIE: My ex-husband lived through it, so. Laugh

CONRAD: It doesn't matter what you're head's in if you're going' 60 mph and you hit a blunt, or a solid object, the inside of you brain is gonna go against that.

LESLIE: Whap

SUSAN: Right. So how much do you think about the real accidents that you could get in? Or the real harm that could be done to you, or in fact, possibly dying on the road?

CONRAD: I don't see that happening...It's not picturing in my mind..

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Of an image that's happening. What's going through my mind is, "how'm I getting' out of this spot?"

LESLIE: Laugh

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

CONRAD: Ya know? Cause, ya hafta realize, if you're on a motorcycle and you don't realize that that could happen, then you're nuts. I mean, you have to have realized that. But, you have to do, "what could I do best to position myself so I have an out so that's not what happens to me?"

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

CONRAD: How am I not going to be pinched into something? You know, if I always have an out and a direction to go, I may get run off the road, but I'm just gonna ride it straight off out of the road, but keep it upright and, you know, I'll get off of it.

SUSAN: Okay,

SUSAN: To LESLIE, do you ever think about it?

LESLIE: Oh yah. Chuckle.

SUSAN: What do you think?

LESLIE: Cause, my dad has had a wreck. Not his fault. Somebody pulled out in front of him.

SUSAN: OK

LESLIE: My brother had an accident with his wife on the back. Somebody pulled out in front of him. And then my ex-husband had an accident and he almost died. So, it does enter my mind. I don't worry so much about my riding and my ability, except if somebody would pull out in front of me.

SUSAN: I see

LESLIE: Of something. So, I'm a lot more cautious than he (CONRAD) is. I know that. He will ride faster than I do.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LESLIE: He goes on and somebody said something about, "aren't you going to try to catch up with him?" I went, "no, if he gets there before I do, I know where I'm goin'." Laugh

CONRAD: She always knows that I will slow down and wait for her.

LESLIE: I ride my own bike. That's why I don't like to ride in big groups. Because, everybody wants to stick together and everybody wants to know you... If one guy wants to go fast, everybody wants to. His (CONRAD's) cousins..

CONRAD: They're pretty bad.

LESLIE: We'll not ride with them. We rode once with them, and I said no. Because, it was like 80 there, an hour there. And, 80 mph back. I didn't even get to see any pretty scenery and I was on the back.

SUSAN: OK, yah.

LESLIE: But it was like, they were going someplace. And, this was supposed to be for a leisurely ride, okay?

SUSAN: Yes

LESLIE: We went someplace, ate lunch, turned right around and went back. Chuckle. That's not my kind of ride. If I want to slow down, or if I want to stop and see something, that's my kind of ride. So, I am very picky about us going riding with people. Because, I would just rather, I don't care if we go with a few people, but I don't want to be with a big group, and I don't want to be in a hurry, because I need that control.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LESLIE: If I get tired, I want to be able to stop.

SUSAN: Yes

CONRAD: She is right. That set of cousins is pretty hard to ride with.

LESLIE: Laugh. They're great, but...

CONRAD: He's, one of the guys that helped me build the bike. And now he has three kids, and all those three kids have motorcycles. And they have friends, and their wives all have motorcycles. So it's a pretty good group when everybody gets together. They used to take a once a year family cruise that they would all ride on. Now, the once a year cruise is like 35 to 50 people.

LESLIE: And it's not a cruise! Laugh

CONRAD: But these guys ride, now they're from Chicago, okay? And they ride like Leslie says, 80 mph, right next to each other.

LESLIE: Yah, I don't like that.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: Right, I mean, right next to each other, right on each other's butts. When they ride in a pack, they'll go 80 mph and get out and pass cars, and continue to stay at 80 mph, any lane, or whatever.

SUSAN: Sounds almost like a flock of birds.

CONRAD: Yah

LESLIE: Yah, and I don't like to ride that way. I don't want anybody that close to me.

CONRAD: It is stressful. I mean, you really gotta be paying attention. It's scary.

LESLIE: On my motorcycle, if the wind is blowing very hard, I get blown all over the road. I won't even ride beside him. I was taught, as a child, that you ride staggered in case anything happens. If something would come out and hit him, or you know, if he would run over anything and have to swerve, you're not in the way. So, I want to stay back.

SUSAN: Right

LESLIE: One time we did have an issue. Did you tell her about the pipe?
 CONRAD: No, not yet.
 LESLIE: On 70?
 CONRAD: No
 LESLIE: So, a couple summers ago we went out to Cataract Lake on the motorcycles, just to see what it was like out there. We were riding back on 70. There was a trailer in front of us with a tractor on it. And, something came flying off of the tractor. We were in kind of a small rush hour traffic. There were cars everywhere.
 CONRAD: Everybody was running about 70 mph.
 LESLIE: We were staggered. We then see this big pipe like thing coming up in the air. Then we saw it coming down on the road.
 SUSAN: Oh my!
 LESLIE: And it's coming down onto the road, and instead of hitting the road and either stopping or rolling, it bounced. And, it bounces...
 CONRAD: It was spinning like when kicking a football.
 SUSAN: uh huh.
 LESLIE: So, the cars were freaking out.
 CONRAD: The pipe bounced end over end each time it hit the road.
 SUSAN: Uh huh.
 LESLIE: The cars were freaking out, one, because they could stop and move over, when they'd seen us, I think they were freaking out more about us because we were on motorcycles and couldn't do a whole lot except pray that it was not going to hit us.
 SUSAN: Uh hmmm
 LESLIE: He was ahead of me and I kind of slowed a little bit. I couldn't slow too much because there were cars coming. We were on an interstate. People behind me couldn't see what was going on.
 SUSAN: Right
 LESLIE: So, once it was past him, I was like "Okay, he's past it."
 SUSAN: That sounds strange, like it was almost a slow motion event.
 LESLIE: It was!
 CONRAD: It was!
 LESLIE: It was like this slow motion thing and it seemed like it lasted forever.
 CONRAD: It did.
 SUSAN: Yah!
 LESLIE: We were close to our exit to get off the interstate. Once he'd seen that I was clear and that I didn't get hit with it, we got to our exit, which had been only a few miles up the road. And, we pulled off, and we just kind of pulled off. And I was like, "Okay, let's go straight home."
 CONRAD: We were like, "whoa!" We were both shaken.
 SUSAN: Yah!
 LESLIE: Laugh. That's probably the scariest thing I'd ever had happen because there was no, we could not tell where that piece of pipe was going.
 SUSAN: Uh huh

LESLIE: Because once we'd seen it hit the ground, we thought, okay it's gonna hit the ground and roll off the road and it's over. But it didn't. It just kept bouncing everywhere. It was like, "okay, this thing is never going to end!" It just kept bouncing and going higher and spinning.

SUSAN: I see

LESLIE: So, that was closest thing that I'd ever had, as far as being an adult, being on a large bike, happen.

SUSAN: And having something that really was threatening.

LESLIE: Yah

CONRAD: We went back out the next day to find out if we could see what it was that caused the problem and everything.

LESLIE: We couldn't find it.

CONRAD: We found a piece of that drive shaft...

LESLIE: Yah, we found a piece of the drive shaft.

CONRAD: That thing was a good size and it was solid metal. And it was just spinning end over end over end and bouncing on the tip.

SUSAN: Oh

CONRAD: It could have gone any direction at all. You didn't know. Do I move? Do I not move? You're just waiting for some kind of direction. But, it stayed right there in front of us.

LESLIE: And it would hit this lane, then that lane, so you couldn't figure out which lane.

SUSAN: You couldn't pick a lane.

LESLIE: No. Laugh

CONRAD: And there were cars coming on both sides and behind us, so we couldn't maneuver to get out of it. You know, it was like, well, if it's gonna hit us, keep the bike going straight and let it hit us and bounce away.

SUSAN: Uh huh..

CONRAD: Tuck down under and let it hit the windshield.

SUSAN: Wow. Well, anything else that you feel is relevant? Important?

CONRAD: Umm.. I think that there needs to be more done about training and education, for kids specifically. Buying a motorcycle, there needs some kind of law put in place to train. There are so many motorcycles out there now. And, I don't just want to go towards the Japanese...

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: But, they call them rice rockets.

SUSAN: I've heard of that, yes.

CONRAD: And crotch rockets. ..

SUSAN: Yes.

LESLIE: They should just give somebody an IQ test.

SUSAN and
LESLIE: Laugh

CONRAD: I mean those kinds of riders, a 16 – 17 year old kid that just got his driver's license does not need to, he should not be allowed, just because he

has five, six, seven thousand dollars that he can slap down and buy a motorcycle..

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

CONRAD: These motorcycles will go 70 to 80 miles an hour within a block

SUSAN: Uh hmm

CONRAD: It's ridiculous to put a kid on a motorcycle like that, who has no experience, to riding a motorcycle like that.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: And that's where the biggest danger is..of kids really getting hurt. They outride what the bike can do. Their ability. Bikes can do all kinds of stuff.

SUSAN: Right

CONRAD: It's the rider that's causing the bike to do what it does.

SUSAN: I am not familiar with laws in this state. But, I know that across the board there are only 3 states that have never had a helmet law. There are many that have gone back and forth with universal law. There are some that have laws for 18 or younger, or 21 or younger mandatory helmet use, or you must have insurance. How is a police officer going to be able to tell if you are 18 or 22?

LESLIE: Right.

CONRAD: Well, they're not.

SUSAN: So, you might as well not have that at all.

CONRAD: Right.

SUSAN: It should either be one way or the other.

LESLIE: And here they do. Here they have the same thing. If you have a beginners permit on a motorcycle, and I'm thinking "a beginners permit on a motorcycle?", alright, whatever. You should have a mini-bike, then. Uh, you have to wear a helmet.

SUSAN: Right

LESLIE: Until you get your regular license. Are you really going to be any smarter, or really any better? No. You've already passed a written test. They have a written test, which is really dumb, I have to say.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

LESLIE: Because whoever wrote that motorcycle test either never rode a motorcycle, because if they did, they would have been dead before they got it finished.

SUSAN: Oh?

LESLIE: You have to do a driving test. The driving test, the only thing that does is you go in a parking lot and maneuver around some cones.

SUSAN: Yes

LESLIE: I've never had to take it.

SUSAN: Oh?

LESLIE: Because, when I turned 16, that was the first year that Indiana had a motorcyclist's license. So, if you had a driver's license, you didn't have to have a motorcycle license.

SUSAN: Oh.

LESLIE: You could ride a motorcycle. So that would have been 1979 when I got mine. So, it either happened in '78 or '79. So, when I got my driver's license, they automatically gave me my motorcycle license. All I have to do was take the goofy written test.

SUSAN: OK

LESLIE: I didn't have to drive for it. We were grandfathered in. But, in the state of Tennessee, I just transferred my license. I didn't have to take a written test and I didn't have to take a driving test for my motorcycle license.

CONRAD: I never had to take a motorcycle riding test either. I got my license when I was 14 in Canada. My parent signed for me to have a driver's license so I could help drive for the family and that sort of thing. That's why I was able to get it when I was younger. I don't think I took a driving test with the motorcycle then.

LESLIE: When I moved back to Indiana, because I lived in Tennessee for 12 years, they only made me take the written test to get my motorcycle license.

SUSAN: Okay

LESLIE: I had to take a written test for my operator's and my motorcycle licenses. So there's not a lot of training you need. You can take a training course, but it's only a few weekends.

SUSAN: Uh huh

LESLIE: They teach you the basics. There isn't a lot of thought into it. Like I said, something I think you need to give an IQ test to somebody before they get on a motorcycle. Laugh

CONRAD: Laugh. Then getting serious. I think they should make it mandatory that you must take a BMV certified test, which means going to the school.

LESLIE: For a driver's license your kids have to have so many hours behind the wheel. So many hours at night. When I was younger and growing up here, if you didn't have driver's education, they made it pretty rough on you to get your driver's license, and your insurance was higher and stuff like that. They don't even do that anymore. But, I do think they should have like a driver's education or something for motorcycles.

CONRAD: That's mandatory before you can purchase a motorcycle.

LESLIE: Too many people get out there.

CONRAD: Not just get a license; before you can purchase you have to take this course to be able to buy a motorcycle.

LESLIE: I don't think they need to be that strong.

SUSAN: That would be a lot of bureaucracy. But I do know that a lot of states have you go to a certain class and when you complete the class successfully, written and driving, then you are able to get your license.

LESLIE: Right. And I think that's a good idea. A lot of people don't know, you're probably going to drop your bike when you are standing still or turning around at a mile an hour because they're just harder to drive.

CONRAD: I don't care who you are. You are going to drop your motorcycle, going slow.

LESLIE: Mine is very heavy.

SUSAN: 800 pounds, yah.

CONRAD: It's going to be going slow, or turning in gravel or some kinda something like that.

LESLIE: I don't like gravel.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

CONRAD: When you're not thinking, and you pull up with a group of people, and you're just right there. The next thing you know, you grab the front break and the front wheel slides right out. That bike goes down. Hopefully you're out from under it.

LESLIE: And my bike turns right, and I've not dropped it yet.

SUSAN: Good.

LESLIE: Chuckling, I've dropped a few, but I haven't dropped that one. Laugh.

SUSAN: Yes, I've seen how pick them up, very tiny women and big bikes. I've seen how they go to a squat and then they lean.

LESLIE: My chairman asked me, "What do you do when you drop it?" I said, "well, first of all, I don't plan on dropping 'em, but if I do, I'm going to bat my blue eyes and ask for help." Laugh

SUSAN: Yes, I would need some help too.

LESLIE: I have not had to pick one up that big.

CONRAD: The main thing is to get out from underneath it. It's just a bike. It's just a big piece of metal. It can always be fixed. Don't worry about it.

LESLIE: Especially women, because most of the time they are women riding on the back, that scares me because I don't ride on the back just with anybody. Never have, never will. There is a bar behind you most of the time and it keeps you from jumping off fast if necessary. I may know how to get out from the seat with a bar, but I don't know if I will be able to move fast enough for the situation. You really need to ride with only someone who is safe. I also see these girls riding in sandals and shorts. My sister-in-law spent several hours in the emergency room getting gravel picked out of her very long, pretty legs because she had sandals and shorts on.

SUSAN: Ugh!

LESLIE: That's the other thing. It's not always the person driving the motorcycle, it's who they have on the back and how much have they thought about what's going to happen.

SUSAN: Yes, I've heard a lot of this all summer and now I am more attuned to it. I've noticed a lot of flip flops and sandals, or tank tops.

CONRAD: Check out what kind of bike they are on. I hate to categorize...

SUSAN: They are not often Harleys. They're the Japanese bikes.

CONRAD: Usually it is the crotch rocket type bike.

LESLIE: I think it has more to do with the age. If you find younger people on a Harley, you're going to find the girls and guys ...

CONRAD: The younger people can't come up with \$25,000 to buy a motorcycle. And, they want that speed, that you know, road racer type thing.

LESLIE: And, they're going someplace. "Well, we're going to a picnic." My sister-in-law used to say, "a pair of jeans is only material, how much is that going to help you?" Well, she found out when somebody pulled out in front of them.

SUSAN: Yes, denim can be pretty tough if it's thick enough.

LESLIE: Right, at least it gives it something to grind against before it gets to your skin.

SUSAN: Right

LESLIE: But, her legs were really torn up from having ridden the road. My brother had to lay it down, or they were going to hit the car because a drunk pulled out in front of them.

SUSAN: I see

LESLIE: That is the aspect that I don't think anybody ever looks at, the people that the rider has on the back. That's who you ought to talk to, some of the people that don't actually drive the motorcycle, the ones whose husbands or boyfriends have motorcycles. Do they ever think about these things? How safe is that person that they're behind.

CONRAD: Really.

LESLIE: How much do they trust?

CONRAD: How much road experience do they have?

LESLIE: When I'm on the back with him, I know he's a good rider. Otherwise, I would not get on the back. But, I am watching.

CONRAD: When we ride together, we ride as one. She knows pretty much what I am going to do. She'll know how I react and that kind of stuff. But, she's always watching too, because I might not have seen what she's seen. So, she'll always warn me, always talk to me.

LESLIE: As far as helmets, I have a full faced helmet that I bought several years ago and it cost me around \$400. We recently bought two new, very good helmets and they were about \$130 each. Good helmets are a lot more affordable than they used to be. But, a lot of these young kids do not want the helmets.

CONRAD: More people don't want helmets. There's no law making me to, so I'm not gonna do it. I don't need to wear a helmet. I don't want to wear a helmet. (mocking others, not speaking for him.)

LESLIE: His cousin..

CONRAD: You couldn't get a helmet on my cousin.

SUSAN: I was expecting that since you said you were a Harley rider, you were going to tell me that you ride without helmet. You are the first Harley rider that I've interviewed, that is committed to riding a helmet.

CONRAD: Oh yah.

SUSAN: All my other ones just hate the idea.

LESLIE: Yep. His cousin, he puts a do-rag on his head and says, "That's my helmet."

CONRAD: That's stupid.

LESLIE: I said, "You know what, head injuries can happen if I accidentally walk into that wall. Why would I want do more damage?"

CONRAD: I wouldn't want to get hit by a cicada at 60 or 70 miles an hour.

SUSAN: Yes, they're pretty big.

LESLIE: Or a June bug.

CONRAD: Yah, June bugs hurt.

LESLIE: Laugh

SUSAN: Well, I am glad that you try to keep safe and I thank you both very much for taking the time to speak with me. You have given me a great deal of valuable information! Thank you very much.

CONRAD: You're welcome. And, let us know if you have any other questions.

LESLIE: Yes any time.

SUSAN: Thanks again. ...

Interview 15: Gibson Barnes

12-12-12

Male, 36

(Read IRB details), asked for permission to go ahead with the interview and tape recording. Gib agreed.

SUSAN: With all that being said, do I have your permission to continue with the interview?

GIB: Yes

SUSAN: Thank you very much. I know you are Emma's cousin, but I don't know that much about you. Can I ask how old you are?

GIB: I'm 36.

SUSAN: And you're in Lindenhurst, IL, is that right?

GIB: Yes, northern Illinois area.

SUSAN: Sure, I know just where you're talking about. If you will, tell me about how you first became interested in becoming a motorcycle rider. How long have you been riding?

GIB: Sure. Actually, steady probably three years. I did a little bit of riding in high school. I got a bike, a fixer upper. So, I rode for a while in high school as well.

SUSAN: Did you fix it up?

GIB: I did.

SUSAN: Oh, you knew how to do that. That's neat!

GIB: Comes in handy.

SUSAN: Yes, definitely. So, you started riding in high school. What influenced that? Was it friends, or who?

GIB : Actually it was one of my teachers. That was the person who gave me the motorcycle. I graduated high school and went right into the military. I don't know what happened to this teacher, actually.

SUSAN: I didn't know that you were in the military.

GIB: I was a United States Marine for 4 years, right out of high school. My parents signed for me to in when I was only 17 years old.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

GIB: After that, I really didn't pick it up, motorcycle riding, until just recently, 3 or 4 years ago. And that reason was because an opportunity came up to buy a real cheap one. And that's what started me on it again.

SUSAN: Okay, so this new one, a few years ago that you first started. What brand was it?

GIB: It was a Honda. 250 cc, a Honda Rebel. Actually it was a real small one and I'm a pretty large fellow.

SUSAN: OK

GIB: It was too small for me.

SUSAN: I see

GIB: But, it was a good starter bike. I could learn on it because it was really light.

SUSAN: Uh huh

GIB: So, I took a motorcycle safety course. Once I got that, I rode on a permit for a while.

SUSAN: So, now in Illinois it is a no motorcycle helmet law state. And so you took it upon yourself to take this class? Or was it something that it was a gateway to you getting your motorcycle license?

GIB: Uhm, I took it on a recommendation. My mother had taken it. She is the person who sold me the motorcycle.

SUSAN: Okay

GIB: So, the recommendation was from her and other people that I had talked to: recommended this class. And it was well worth it.

SUSAN: Where did you take that class?

GIB: It was a through a college, I can look that up for you.

SUSAN: You're in Lindenhurst. Is that in Lake County?

GIB: That is Lake County

SUSAN: So, it was just some university in the area that had a program?

GIB: Correct. I paid a \$25 donation that was refundable at the end of the course if you were not happy. Uh, I can't read the writing on this thing.

SUSAN: That's okay. But, it was within the state of IL.

GIB: It was within the state, yes.

SUSAN: Okay, so, uhm, now do you still have that bike?

GIB: I sold that bike and upgraded to a 750 Honda.

SUSAN: Okay. Now it this one that they call a rice rocket? Where you lean forward on it and look a little bit like a racer?

GIB: No, this is a cruiser.

SUSAN: Okay

GIB: A Honda Shell Spirit

SUSAN: OK

GIB: I needed more power for a larger bike.

SUSAN: I see. Because you're a bigger person..

GIB: Right.

SUSAN: So, who do you ride with?

GIB: Well, I ride with my brother from time to time.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

GIB: He doesn't have a motorcycle, but he borrows one from his neighbor.

SUSAN: Do you go out on those big rides, the big events?

GIB: No, I haven't done anything like that. Sometimes I go out on a ride with a group from the neighborhood. This summer, that ended with a tragedy.

SUSAN: Oh! That's awful! What happened?

GIB: A neighbor got hit by a truck and lost his leg.

SUSAN: Oh, my gosh!

GIB: Completely took it off. I really have not ridden too much. I could see it. I was right there. We were within feet of each other. That truck hit him.

SUSAN: My gosh..Was it just that the person, as they say, didn't see you?

GIB: It was a Y intersection. He was at a stop sign. The truck was at a stop sign. We had the right of way. We were on main drag, kind of going around a corner. There was a turn, and there was a group of motorcycles in front of

us. They turned right. The truck driver assumed that we with the other motorcycles. He saw the other motorcycle group, he looked to the right, but never looked left. And before he knew it, he ran into my friend, and he was down.

SUSAN: Oh yah. That is terrible.

GIB: They saying is that motorcycle rider has to worry about everybody else. That's true.

SUSAN: Yes, so I wonder, you know, you take this safety course to try to protect yourself. Before you saw this, what other things did you normally do to protect yourself when you go out riding?

GIB: Look, look and more look.

SUSAN: Yep

GIB: Like a whiplash kind of thing. My head has to be moving constantly. They can't see you as well as they can see a big car.

SUSAN: True

GIB: Sometimes they just don't even care.

SUSAN: Yes, but I really do think that sometimes, if you get in a blind spot and stay in a blind spot, it's difficult for a driver to see unless they shift in their seat. They might miss something easily.

GIB: Right. Well, that's what happened to my friend. Ask yourself, are you in a blind spot? Do you have an out? Do you have a place to roll?

SUSAN: So, would you say that your strategy is your primary means of protecting yourself?

GIB: Absolutely.

SUSAN: So what about leather jacket, jeans, helmet, gloves, boots?

GIB: When I ride, I do wear a jacket and helmet. I do wear an above the ankle boot. I wear things to protect myself from the road in case I go down.

SUSAN: Yup. Do you ever ride anybody on the back?

GIB: I used to, in the past, until the accident. But, I will no longer do that.

SUSAN: Okay. Because I hear stories. A lot of the people that I've spoken with complain that they notice in the summer, a girl on the back of a bike with shorts and flip flops. They know that the rider doesn't realize how bad it would be if they would actually fall off and have to skid across the pavement.

GIB: Right. When I did have riders on the back, I required them to wear the same things that I was wearing, the helmet, the jacket and jeans, at a minimum.

SUSAN: Very good. And, you don't even have to wear the helmet in Illinois, but you choose to.

GIB: My friend that got hit, his head hit the hood of the truck hard enough to dent the hood. So, he was wearing a helmet.

SUSAN: Okay

GIB: Had he not been wearing a helmet, the outcome would have been a lot different, most likely.

SUSAN: Right. That was tragic enough as it is.

GIB: Yes

SUSAN: So, another question that I ask is if you could think about how the media portrays motorcycle riders, motorcycle riding, whether it be in movies, television, or how the newscasters cover a story involving motorcycles, do you have any opinions? Anything, you want to share? Any angle that you'd like.

GIB: Not really.

SUSAN: Okay

GIB: I think there are good and bad riders. We've all noticed motorcycle riders who will ride between two sets of cars, and those, like anything else, aren't too smart. Excessively fast.

SUSAN: Yes, I notice hear at the end of a news report, the commentator will say the rider was wearing a helmet or the rider was not wearing a helmet. That is sort of the crux of my question. I wonder why people choose to wear to the helmet or why they don't, especially in states where they have a choice.

GIB: That's a good question. I do have one friend completely refuses to wear a helmet. When he crosses over to another state. I've never really asked him why he wouldn't wear something that would make him safer.

SUSAN: Right

GIB: I think it's like some people who still won't wear a seatbelt. I don't know if it a question of comfort. My father didn't like to wear a seatbelt because he felt almost claustrophobic.

SUSAN: I can see how claustrophobia might play a part.

GIB: I don't know if that helps.

SUSAN: It does help to consider that claustrophobia might influence it. I know that personal freedom, or infringement on personal freedom, is something I hear quite a bit.

GIB: Okay. Just because they have to.

SUSAN: Right, they don't like being told that they have to. I guess that's it.

GIB: Okay. That makes sense.

SUSAN: It does make sense, but I think your earlier question is why wouldn't you want to wear a helmet to protect yourself?

GIB: Right.

SUSAN: Right. Very interesting. Have you ever seen the movie, "Wild Hogs"?

GIB: Yes

SUSAN: That was sort of an interesting portrayal of how biker gangs used to be. I have a lot of people tell me, "it isn't like that anymore."

GIB: I'm sure there are parts where it is still like that.

SUSAN: They actually call them the One Percenters.

GIB: Yes.

SUSAN: I have not personally met one yet.

GIB: Me either.

SUSAN: Gib, I want to thank you so much for your time tonight. I really appreciate your input.

GIB: You're welcome. I would like to read your paper when you are done.

Interview 16: DQII

12/14/12

Male, 28

(Recited the IRB requirements)

SUSAN: With that said, do I have your permission to proceed with this interview?

DQII: Yes

SUSAN: I didn't know that you were a motorcycle rider until Darlene mentioned it.

DQII: Oh yah

SUSAN: I start every interview with the question, "what influenced your interest to be a motorcycle rider?" Tell me how it all began for you.

DQII: Well, I had a friend when I was younger, a really early teen, back in Chicago. His father, his step father had a Harley and ya know, I was just always fascinated with his motorcycle, and others I noticed. When I was a kid I used to put something in the spoke of my bicycle tire to make it sound loud, like the motorcycle muffler. You know?

SUSAN: Yah, I remember kids doing that.

DQII: I just always loved motorcycles. I thought they were awesome. That's where it started, I guess.

SUSAN: Did you kind of like the Harley? Or, did you like all motorcycles?

DQII: I liked all motorcycles. You know, even now, I own a Harley Davidson, but..you know, I do like sport bikes. I think they can be a little uncomfortable. I never really rode one, but from how I ride, because I have my feet all the way up front because I have pendic controls on mine so my feet are out further.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DQII: So, to have my knees cranked back, I think it might be uncomfortable.

SUSAN: Yes, because you are taller. You're taller than average. I can see why you would want a bigger bike to be comfortable.

DQII: Yah, that's kind of how it is. I am tall. I'm 6'4".

SUSAN: Yup

DQII: So, I think the Harley, or not just the Harley, but cruisers in general, are preferred by guys who are taller.

SUSAN: Uh huh. I can see why...So, now, when did you get your first motorcycle?

DQII: I got my first motorcycle when I got out of the military in 2010. I saved up enough money in the military and I paid cash for it.

SUSAN: That was "the" Harley that you still have now?

DQII: Yes, that is the Harley that I have now. That was my first Harley. That was my first motorcycle I ever rode, first motorcycle I ever rode. I never owned a motorcycle before.

SUSAN: So, when you were in the military, did you notice guys there that had them?

DQII: Yah, there were guys who had motorcycles in the military. You know, when I was in Italy there were a few guys who had bikes. One of the guys, he was my supervisor, he actually had a Harley and another guy, had a sport bike.

SUSAN: Was it a Ducati?

DQII: No, it was a Gixxer (slang for GSX-R model). He had a Suzuki GSX-R 1, it was either a 1,000 or a 600.

SUSAN: I ask because I am learning all about these bikes. I interviewed one guy with a Ducati and my gosh! I thought Harleys were expensive. But, that's another one that's really crazy.

DQII: Yah, I know. Ducatis are very expensive. For one reason why they are so expensive is that they're not made here. They are made in Italy. Even though Ducatis are nice, I'd take a Yamaha R1, which is probably my favorite sports bike. If I were gonna compare sport bikes, I'd take the Yamaha probably over Ducati. I just like the Yamaha.

SUSAN: Cool. Okay. So, I know that you probably ride with Michael because he has a motorcycle. Who do you ride with?

DQII: Well, Mike doesn't have a motorcycle, actually. He crashed it.

SUSAN: Oh?

DQII: And I was behind him when it happened. I witnessed it.

SUSAN: Oh my gosh!

DQII: We were on the highway going 55 miles an hour. He hit a pothole on the highway that he didn't see. It shook the hell out of his bike. His back fender actually went to the front..

SUSAN: Oh my!

DQII: Completely popped his back tire. He spun out of control and slid about 15 or 20 feet, on the concrete, on the highway, with a bunch of cars coming behind him.

SUSAN: Oh, that's awful.

DQII: I mean we had, and there were other guys who were on the opposite side. We they'd seen a bike down, they immediately pulled over to the side. We had guys, other motorcycle riders, jumping over guardrails and stuff coming up to asking if we were okay. Do we need a ride anywhere? Do we need a ride to the hospital? I mean like, it was pretty crazy.

SUSAN: Wooowww

DQII: Luckily, he was got a scratch. He got a couple scratches, scrapes, and that's about it.

SUSAN: Wow. I didn't know about that.

DQII: It was pretty crazy.

SUSAN: I didn't know that one. That was this summer?

DQII: No, this was last summer, I believe.

SUSAN: Oh, okay. And he didn't get another bike, then?

DQII: No, he didn't get another bike. You know, he wants to get one, but financially, it's just not in his budget right now. And, it's winter time, so that doesn't make it too enticing to go shopping for one.

SUSAN: Right. Especially in Chicago.

DQII: Yah.

SUSAN: So, who else do you ride with?

DQII: I used to ride with a buddy of mine. You know, he lived around the corner. And, another guy, a little older guy. We used to go on little rides around

Elgin and the surrounding country area. Probably two main guys that I used to ride with, oh, I had another guy I used to ride with, that had the same bike as mine. He moved somewhere down south. I can't remember where. I think it was Arizona.

SUSAN:

Oh, okay.

DQII:

So, he used to be the main one. Right now, I really don't ride with anybody because the main guy I used to ride with moved and he sold his bike. And the other guy, he also moved to another state. And then my cousin, Mike, lost his bike. So....

SUSAN:

I wondered if you ever belonged to any organizations. Because some people do belong and they ride with a lot of people. And some people won't ride with a lot of people.

DQII:

I used to ride with a group of guys. They were older, actually. They were all in their 50s.

SUSAN:

Uh hmm

DQII:

They were all a part of the HOG organization, you know, the Harley Davidson riders, have their own organization and this was a HOG Chapter.

SUSAN:

Right

DQII:

So, it was a bunch of guys from the HOGs. They pretty much got away from the HOGS because they got to be pretty cocky, you know what I'm saying?

SUSAN:

Right

DQII:

So, these guys pulled away and they got to be their own little group. I went on several runs with them. But, I forgot what they called it, but it wasn't like an official club.

SUSAN:

Okay

DQII:

They didn't have any patches or anything like that, so...

SUSAN:

Okay

DQII:

But, we did have meetings. We'd have meetings, I think once a month, at the Moose Lodge. But, like I said, it was people from the HOG Chapter that just broke off from the organization. They basically created a group for just like the Elgin motorcycle riders.

SUSAN:

Okay. That sounds like it might be fun because the group is smaller, you know more people, and it's local.

DQII:

Yah

SUSAN:

So, what do you do to keep yourself safe when you are riding?

DQII:

I wear a helmet. Sometimes I don't and I get yelled at from my mom.

SUSAN:

Yah

DQII:

Yah, so I wear a helmet. I wear gloves. If it's in the summer, I just wear a T-shirt and a helmet. Your normal glasses to stop the wind, motorcycle glasses. Yup, just a helmet and gloves.

SUSAN:

Okay...

DQII:

In the winter time, or when it is colder, I'll put on my Harley Leather coat. It helps, but I wear because it's colder. My buddy, in the summer, he'll

ride with a full leather, which is good, because he actually went down on his bike. I don't know. If it's hot, I just wear the T-shirt.

SUSAN: Yup, I've heard some people say that even if it's 90 degrees outside, they're wearing the leather. They're just completely covered.

DQII: Yeah. And that's how my buddy was.

SUSAN: Okay, so I know what you wear. I'm kind of curious. Did you ever take a motorcycle course?

DQII: No, I didn't. I never took a motorcycle course. This is how I got my bike. My cousin found the same bike online from a private dealer. It was about 3 to 4 thousand dollars less than what Harley was trying to charge.

SUSAN: Okay

DQII: It was actually a year newer than the one at Harley. It already had four controls on it, which are an additional \$100 to get those added on, and it had only 700 miles. So, it wasn't even broken in yet. I got it for \$10,900.

SUSAN: Oh, nice!

DQII: And it was a 2009. I got out of the military in 2010. So, I got it right when I got out of the military. The Harley dealership had one that was a 2008 with 3,000 miles on it. They tried to charge me \$4,000 more.

SUSAN: Uh hmmm

DQII: So, I never took any safety course. We went to this private guy. I looked at the bike. Loved it. Bought it. My cousin, who had a motorcycle, so, he'd driven motorcycles before, he drove it home for me. I went to the DMV, did my motorcycle test. I passed it. I got my permit. I went home and got my bike and said, "well, I guess I have to start learning how to ride this thing." I just got on it and started riding. I went slow, just around the block. I took it just around my neighborhood for a while. Then I took it in the community. When I got more comfortable, I took it out on the highway.

SUSAN: Uh huh

DQII: That's how it went.

SUSAN: Okay

DQII: I think the motorcycle safety course is, I don't want to say it isn't good. I guess if you never rode before, it's good. But, I mean, I never rode before and I'm fine.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DQII: Thank God, knock on wood; I've never got into an accident. I've had a few close calls. But, you know, no accidents.

SUSAN: Okay. So, another thing that I ask about is the media. Sometimes motorcycles are portrayed, and motorcycle riders are portrayed in film, in television shows, they're covered on the news when things happen, and I was just wondering, if you think of those things, in general, do you have any opinions about motorcycle riders?

DQII: I'm not sure what they say about them. I can't think of anything.

SUSAN: Can you think about when motorcycle riders are featured in a television show?

DQII: Oh, like Sons of Anarchy. I love that show. It's a good show. Are you familiar with that show?

SUSAN: I've heard of it from some of my folks that I have interviewed. I haven't seen it.

DQII: Yah, Sons of Anarchy. It's a nice show. It portrays bikers as they were.. in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, maybe through the 90s into the early 2000s. It's basically, a bunch of guys that sell drugs and are into prostitution and are you know, biker-types dudes.

SUSAN: Uh hmm

DQII: I mean now, motorcycles are so, everyone has a motorcycle. I mean old people, old old people, might drive a motorcycle. Older women, older men, business people, you know, motorcycle riders have become much more diverse.

SUSAN: Riding is more main stream for everybody?

DQII: Exactly. It's more "main stream". I've seen all these gangs, Hells Angels and such. Motorcycle groups and clubs, whatever you call it, it all got started in the 1940s and 1950s by military member who, when they got out of the military, were looking for something to do that brought them together with other people who had experience in the military.

SUSAN: Uh huh

DQII: I guaranty you that most motorcycle clubs have some affiliation to the military, I mean organizations that have been around for a very long time, the founding members of their club were military veterans. Back in the day, I mean. But now, it's not like that. It is main stream. The guys that are selling drugs and dealing in prostitution, it probably does still exist.

SUSAN: Right

DQII: But, it's so low key. Or, it's just such a small segment of people riding motorcycles, the groups. You don't see it so much.

SUSAN: It probably is still going on, but maybe not that large of a percentage of motorcycle riding organizations as it once way?

DQII: Right. I mean, you know, like, The Hells Angles, and The Monguls had a huge fight in Las Vegas. I mean, they were shooting at each other! You know, going all cowboy on each other.

SUSAN: Chuckle

DQII: You don't have that very often anymore with motorcycle groups because most are mainstream riders. Most groups today don't have to go all cowboy on each other. They have understood that, you know, we have to change our image. I mean, a lot of the old guys don't like it. They hate it. I mean, that's what they were about. But, I mean, motorcycle clubs and riders, as to how they are portrayed is completely different now as opposed to what they used to be when they originally started. Most of the motorcycle clubs didn't start off as criminal organizations.

SUSAN: Right

DQII: Until the 60's 70's and 80's, it was just a bunch of WWII military guys from the 50s who organized just to have fun.

- SUSAN: Yah, I hear a lot about, I'm actually surprised to hear how many of my guys are ex-military. Whether or not they are younger or older, many of them were influenced by Harley Davidson because they were the "American made" and they associated it with their military friends.
- DQII: That's right. And, I mean, I'd like to get into a club, but I am very cautious about it because I am thinking of a career in law enforcement. I've been out to a few bars in Elgin. I've seen a few guys with patches on. It seems like it's difficult to get into those clubs unless you know somebody.
- SUSAN: Right
- DQII: I'd like to get into some little club or group, but I can't just go up to somebody in a bar and say, "hey, I'd like to join your club?" It just doesn't work like that. They would have to get to know me and I would have to get to know them and the group to know what they were all about.
- SUSAN: Maybe if you go to an event, like a big charity ride, you might get to talk more closely with some people.
- DQII: Yah, I mean, I tried that. I haven't been on too many. It was with the bunch of guys that I rode with from the HOG chapter. I didn't notice a lot of patches or indications of groups near us. There is a bar out near St. Charles. It's somewhat out in the country. I walked in with a girl one time and found out it's a biker bar. They have outdoor tables and horseshoe pits and fire pits. There are a bunch of riders that are hanging out there all the time. I can see their patches. But, I don't want to just walk up to them and start talking. They might be like, "hey, who the hell are you?!"
- SUSAN: Yah, I guess you have to be kind of careful. You don't know if people are going to receptive or if it's going to be cliquey.
- DQII: Exactly! And one thing I found out about the people I'd seen sporting different patches, it does seem like it's kind of cliquey. We have the Brothers Motorcycle Group, the Unknown Few Motorcycle group, and there's the Fugari Tribe. But, the Unknown Few and the Brothers are the two that I see most around here. I heard that the Brothers are actually really bad. I know a guy from school who actually was trying to become a member of the Brothers and he said they try to do some crazy shit. I wouldn't join because of what they do. He said they actually showed up to where he worked to make sure he worked there. They want your background. They want to know where you work, where you live, everything about you.
- SUSAN: That's kind of creep. And, especially if you are considering going into law enforcement.
- DQII: Exactly, law enforcement, they would never let me join. And, you can't be in law enforcement and be a member of a motorcycle group like that. But, they do have law enforcement motorcycle clubs.
- SUSAN: But, you're kind of busy too. It's not like you have all the time in the world to be social.
- DQII: Right, I don't have any time to jump and ride to Iowa or whatever. I have a full time job. I have school. I don't have time to make it my full time life.

- SUSAN: I agree. So, do you have any other comments or anything that you'd like to comment on regarding your motorcycle riding?
- DQII: No, not really. It's just that motorcycle riding is something I really love. It's a passion of mine, something I really enjoy. I thought I almost would have to sell my bike because I don't have a car. I actually bought a motorcycle before I bought my car. That seems like a cockeyed idea, but, it was affordable, the motorcycle. I could pay cash for it at the time. But now, I was able to get a car by financing. So, the motorcycle isn't costing me anything.
- SUSAN: Right
- DQII: I don't have any other comments. Do you have any other questions for me?
- SUSAN: I don't. I would like to thank you for giving me this time and sharing your thoughts with me about your motorcycle riding.
- DQII: No problem.

Interview 17: Bobby Evers

01-03-13

Male, age 33,

I read the IRB protocol and asked for permission to continue with the interview.

BOBBY: Sure, that's fine

SUSAN: I would like to know what influenced you to become interested in motorcycle riding.

BOBBY: Growing up in Michigan, my dad always had dirt bikes or three wheelers or four wheelers. I've always loved to ride and now I live in the city and there is nowhere to ride a four wheeler or dirt bike or anything, sooo I ended up getting a street bike.

SUSAN: Oh, okay

BOBBY: So I'd be able to ride somethin' around

SUSAN: So, what kind of motorcycle do you have then?

BOBBY: It is a 1983 Suzuki 1100.

SUSAN: Okay..and, have you had that for a while?

BOBBY: I've had it for about a year now. My dad actually gave it to me, sooo..

SUSAN: Yah, I call your dad the most fun grandpa ever

BOBBY: Laugh, he is pretty fun.

SUSAN: Yes, anything that is outdoors and has motion, I think he's got the toy for it.

BOBBY: Uh huh!

SUSAN: So, who do you ride with?

BOBBY: Uhhh, I've mainly just ridden by myself. I really haven't ridden it that much. I've ridden it a little but, every time I've gone out, it's been by myself.

SUSAN: I know sometimes people gravitate to big groups, or prefer their little groups.

BOBBY: Yah, not me.

SUSAN: What city are you in?

BOBBY: We're in Lenexa Kansas

SUSAN: Oh, okay. So, what do you do to keep yourself safe?

BE: Oh I wear a helmet, and obey the laws of the road, I guess.

SUSAN: Okay.

BOBBY: And then, if I'm going a long distance, I'll wear jeans and steel-toed boots. Or, if I am just shooting up the street to the store, then I won't worry about that.

SUSAN: So, do you wear a helmet because you have to in that state, or is it a choice?

BOBBY: No, it's a choice. We don't have to. I had a best friend die on a four wheeler because he wasn't wearing a helmet, so that's kind of why I make the choice to always wear a helmet.

SUSAN: Ooooh, yes. I see. When did that happen?

BOBBY: That was back in 2004, Dec. 11th, 2005.

SUSAN: Really not that long ago.

SUSAN: Have you ever been in an accident?

BOBBY: Not on the motorcycle.

SUSAN: Oh?

BOBBY: Growing up on 4 wheelers and 3 wheelers, yah, I've had a few. But, nothing serious happened. I've never broken anything.

SUSAN: Good! Now, when you were going to move from being a dirt bike, 4-wheeler rider to a motorcycle rider, did take any courses?

BOBBY: No

SUSAN: Okay.

BOBBY: I pretty much grew up on riding things, so I knew how to do it.

SUSAN: So, you had the dexterity, probably..from all that riding when you were a kid.

BOBBY: Yah

SUSAN: Okay. And then the other things that I am curious about since I am a communication major, and I don't know if you pay attention, I am curious if you think about when you watch television, whether it is a TV show, or a news cast, and the way people report incidences involving motorcycle riding or riders, or movies, or anything in pop culture where motorcycle riding is portrayed, do you ever have any opinions about that?

BOBBY: Uhhhhmmmm, I don't know if I really have any opinions. I kind of, everybody I see, whether it's on TV or in real life, if they're riding without a helmet, I think that's the dumbest thing you could possibly do. And that's probably the only opinion I've ever really formed. I don't think Hollywood portrays it the way it really is, soo.

SUSAN: I see. Pretty much in anything, I guess.

BOBBY: Yah

SUSAN: What kind of helmet do you have? Is it a full face, or?

BOBBY: It is. It's a full face helmet with a flip up visor. It's been approved by DOT.

SUSAN: OK. Actually the inspiration for my research was an article on Ben Rothlisburger when he crashed his motorcycle and he had not been wearing a helmet. I am curious why people won't wear the helmet.

BOBBY: Oh, okay

SUSAN: That doesn't make sense to me. I am trying to interview different riders, all ages, all motorcycles, to find out what it is that makes you want to wear the helmet or not wear the helmet?

BOBBY: I guess I'll probably be your outer statistic because I am so pro helmet, chuckle, for my age group at least.

SUSAN: Right! And, I wonder if you might have felt this way had you not experienced your friend not died in that accident.

BOBBY: No, I didn't. Like I said, it was if I had I would wear it, if I didn't have it I wouldn't worry about it. Especially riding on the street, I neeeeeevvvvver thought about wearing a helmet when just riding on the street until after he passed away.

SUSAN: Okay

BOBBY: And then also, like I said, with 4 wheelers and dirt bikes, I did a lot of trail riding. If I was doing a lot of hard riding on a trail, then I would definitely wear a helmet, but, on a street bike or Harley, before the accident, I never even thought about riding with a helmet.

SUSAN: Did you have kids then?

BOBBY: No, I did not

SUSAN: Okay. But you have kids now, right?

BOBBY: Yes, I have 2 daughters, five and six.

SUSAN: Okay. Probably a lot of things enter into it for people.

BOBBY: Oh yah!

SUSAN: Well, very good. Is there anything that you might like to share about your motorcycle riding?

BOBBY: Not much. Like I said, I consider myself a pretty safe driver. The accident really influenced the way I ride now days compared to the way I used to be. So, I try to be as safe as I can.

SUSAN: Very good! Well, I don't think I have any more questions. I sure appreciate your time!

BOBBY: You're welcome.

SUSAN: You enjoy your weekend!

BOBBY: You too! Bye!

Interview 18: Jeff Farmer
6-24-12.
Male, age 52

Read the IRB requirement and asked for approval

SUSAN: So, now you've given me approval per the IRB guidelines, so we if you could, why don't you go ahead and tell me what you want to tell me about how you got started riding motorcycles.

JEFF: OK. Ummm. When I was in the navy in Dallas, Texas, at the naval air station, I started taking an interest in motorcycles. I had an idea about them. I had a sense that I'd like to save money (for a motorcycle), had a sense of adventure. That never occurred because I volunteered to go to the Middle East. While I was over there, there was a Harley Davidson shop over in UAE.

SUSAN: I didn't realize that. That's neat.

JEFF: Yah, and motorcyclists seemed to, or Harley Davidson enthusiasts, I'm not necessarily a, I guess I'm a, I don't have a Harley Davidson. But, I always thought about attempting to get one for my first. But, when I went to try to get one for the first time, in the early '90s, apparently that was the height of the Harley Davidson craze of something because there was a year and half wait to get a new one. I wasn't too interested in a used one. When I was over in the Middle East, this one guy on our weekend off, we'd go to the other side of the UAE and drive across the desert. We were looking around. When I got back to the states in the spring of '93, I found there was a motorcycle safety course, and I didn't even have to have a motorcycle to take it. So, I took the safety course. I kind of got my card punched in learning how to ride, before actually getting one. I just wandered around the different motorcycle shops and I'd seen a Yamaha Verago 535 PC. That looked like a miniature Harley and I thought, there we go! It's readily available. It's only maybe a tenth of the price of a Harley Davidson, and it was shaft driven, so I didn't have to worry about a chain, or belts or anything breaking, so... A Japanese bike is fairly dependable.

SUSAN: So, it's been good?

JEFF: Oh yah. Easy on the gas, when you get about 45 miles a gallon.

SUSAN: How nice!

JEFF: And, it gave me a new freedom of trying to buy a vehicle in Maryland. That's where I was last stationed in the navy. So, that was my first motorcycle, a '93 Yamaha Verago. And then, before I left there, there was a, I think it was a 15, no, it was like a, I forget. Like a 1200 cc Honda Magna, a V65. It was a nice looking motorcycle and I had some extra money as I was separating (from the military) and bought it. But, I ended up selling it. The tuition at IUPUI for a certificate program that the university, so I sold it and took a loss on that. But, I still have my 535. I still have it today. I mean, I've rode that bike. I was kind of timid in

learning at first, after I bought it. But yah, it was a sense of adventure and one guy nicknamed me Road Hawk.

SUSAN: That's a cool name!

JEFF: There, where I was stationed, there was a guy that would say, "hey, Road Hawk, you need to get this paper signed by, blah, blah, blah, blah." So I thought, "hey there's a nickname!"

SUSAN: Yah, that's a good one.

JEFF: I think it was like '99 or 2000 when I finally decided to get a yahoo email account and I was trying to think of all kinds of names. I was trying to set myself apart from others when I was creating the email account. Vagabond Rider.

SUSAN: Okay

JEFF: And every time I tell people and I say rider they, I don't know how their phonetics are screwed up, but they say, "is that with a "D" or a "T"?"

SUSAN: Yes

JEFF: So, that's with the Yamaha Verago. Back in 2006 I went to Iraq and came back and had no transportation when I got stationed out at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I was looking through the paper and I found a Yamaha V Start, 650. That's a little larger. That was my second bike. I still had the first one, but I this one while I was down there. I brought it back to Indianapolis with me. It was a bigger bike, bulkier, had a windshield, footrest, saddle bags, the whole works. That other bike, the Verago, I never put a windshield on it. When you're riding at night, in the spring..

SUSAN: Yah

JEFF: Luckily, Maryland had a mandatory helmet law. When you feel these beetles bounce off your chest, going 45, 50, 60 miles an hour, and you hear something go clunk against your helmet...

SUSAN: Yes

JEFF: You're not picking out insects from your teeth, either.

SUSAN: I know! People do mention the bugs a lot of the time, but some rocks and pebbles sometimes, too.

JEFF: As a motorcyclists, depending on how many, I've taken the ABATE Motorcycle safety course at least three, maybe four times, just the basic one. And, I've taken the experienced rider course three or four times. Because, some insurers like to see no more than a five year lapse since the previous ABATE course.

SUSAN: Oh, okay.

JEFF: And it's good. The experienced rider course is one day. You need to have your own motorcycle and at ABATE you're using a little, lighter, 125 or 250 CC motorcycle.

SUSAN: Okay. I have heard people tell me that they took the course as a way of deciding if they really were that interested in it. They were a little unsure that they could do the moves. And that was an ideal way to check it out without having to invest in the motorcycle first.

JEFF: Yes, and it also, since these are not cruiser motorcycles, they're just basic 250 ccs, really there's no one in their right mind who is going to get on the

interstate with a 250CC. No one in their right mind. But, I think some people will still try it, but..a 250 CC is a good learner bike. Maybe something for someone to graduate into something larger. It's like a firearm. If someone wanted to practice with a 22 caliber and worked their way up calibers, versus someone who's never fired before, and then go try to fire a 45, 357, something large caliber, they're going to be afraid. They will become timid and it will turn them away.

SUSAN: Yah. So, when you first were in the military you were exposed to motorcycles, or that's where you developed an interest? Was it because of people around you that were talking about them, or had them?

JEFF: Well, I've known people, growing up, even through high school. You know, before that. But, I didn't have the means. I never was trailed on one, as a passenger. But, I had a lot of people whose interest in motorcycles came from minibikes.

SUSAN: Yes

JEFF: Or motocross or something. But no, I just, I guess found my true sense of adventure and want from something a little more risky. But, something is only as risky as you allow it to be. I was just having an interest in getting outdoors and experiencing with my senses. It wasn't about a wild side, but 14 years in the navy and not a single tattoo?

SUSAN: Chuckle. So, the wild side came out in a different way than tattoos?

JEFF: Sure

SUSAN: Okay. So, do you ride with friends ever? Do you belong to any groups?

JEFF: I've done a lot of ABATE events. Back in the mid to late 1990s after I left the navy I would do that. I haven't had much time to get out and do anything else, other than ABATE. Again, they've had this book for a long time called Tour Indiana Passport. They encourage motorcycling. For a fee they create tours, the ABCs of Indiana.

SUSAN: Oh

JEFF: This year is the first year they have not had the book, but they have the booklet and based on the picture on the front, they know if it is a current picture or not. So, no one can try to say that they used last year's pictures for this year's Tour Indiana. Since there is no name of a municipality in Indiana that starts with an X. there are only 25 places to tour. But, the tour includes 5 big parks. You must take a photo of yourself in front of the sign for that place, like the state park, of city, or post office...

SUSAN: Oh, okay

JEFF: There are a few different ones, but it's basically to discover Indiana, but on your motorcycle.

SUSAN: And there are so many pretty places to see.

JEFF: A lot of winding roads. In the latest one, they put recommendations for the scenic route to get where you are going.

SUSAN: Right. It sounds like they are an organization that promotes safe, enjoyable riding. But ABATE gives courses to teach people how to ride a motorcycle.

JEFF: Right. The Dept. of Education sponsors it. ABATE provides the instructors in the courses.

SUSAN: Uh hmm ABATE is part of the Dept. of Education.

JEFF: Right, people go a few nights a week and some weekend time. When the student passes the ABATE course, they get an exemption from taking the motorcycle test at a license branch.

SUSAN: Yes, I've heard that, too. And, in more states than Indiana. I haven't talked to any of the motorcycle people at IUPUI yet in terms of instructions.

JEFF: When I was in the military, it was stipulated that you had to wear a certain amount of safety gear. They would say that if you were ever in an accident, and it was found out that you were injured (while on active duty), if you were injured and did not take the safety measures, it was all on you. They're not covering you. You may be on active duty, but they're not gonna cover you for a claim if it was your negligence. If you were a motorcyclist, you had to have your helmet, your jacket, your pants, your safety boots, gloves, and a safety vest.

SUSAN: OK

JEFF: All requirements to get on a military base, as well.

SUSAN: So now that you are not held to those requirements, what do you do to protect yourself?

JEFF: I don't need the vest any more, but I will still do everything else. Because, you can make your helmet just as cleverly designed as you want. I put decals on mine.

SUSAN: If you can think of old movies, new movies, television shows to the new casters who talk about things related to motorcycle riding, do you have any opinions on anything media related that you'd like to share?

JEFF: Well, I think that every time there is an accident reports, I don't know if it's the national statistics, it's sort of like someone is mining data for helmet use? Were they drinking? But, what really irks me is how easily the person who is in the car can say, I didn't see 'em. That's all they have to say is "I didn't see 'em." And. They're not at fault.

SUSAN: Right

JEFF: It's been proven that most accidents happen at intersections. That's where the safety course is really relevant, never take for granted, even if you made eye contact, that they're gonna yield.

SUSAN: Anything else?

JEFF: You hear a lot about gangs, or outlaws, but I don't know anybody. In the media you don't hear too lot about motorcyclists, ABATE has a bumper sticker that says Educate, not Legislate because if you don't watch it, your rights go right out the door.

SUSAN: I am not keen on changing laws, but I am curious if there is something I can do, or something I can say, to make people to choose to wear the helmet.

JEFF: Right, and that's where the helmet, on the same level as the football helmet that you wear for protection. I am someone who is always gonna wear a helmet because I am smart enough to know that you could just be

sitting on your motorcycle and lose your balance and have the motorcycle fall over on you. If you could just follow the pattern as you fall, your head is going to crack on something. Even just sitting still the cement is always going to win.

People will complain that a helmet is too hot. I see people that are only wearing sunglasses and I think they are really taking a chance. The helmet, and making it mandatory, I don't want to call it nanny state, but the people who ride motorcycles should be smart enough to know to wear one, but, for me, all I can do is take care of me. How to you penalize those that don't and then have an accident.

I understand where I might have the right away, but if someone wants to take it from me, take it. Two wheels vs. four, they're gonna win every time. But as far as helmet laws, there will be people to find a reason why should they be singled out?

Had to stop the transcription because subject was too tangential.

End of transcripts.

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Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

- M.A. Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis**
Applied Communication
Concentration: Health Communication and Organizational Communication
Degree: August 2013
Advisor: Elizabeth Goering, Ph.D.
- B.A. Hugh Downs School of Human Communication**
Arizona State University Tempe
Major: Communication
Concentration: Organizational Communication and Intercultural Communication
Degree Awarded: 2005

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Communication Studies, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2011-2012

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Health Communication
Organizational Communication
Workplace Health and Safety

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Diabetes Narratives, Patients Adjustment to Living with Type II Diabetes
Funded by the Eli Lilly Foundation, coordinated by the Indiana Council on Intercultural Communication, and supervised by Elizabeth Goering, PhD. Responsibilities included analysis of patient narrative text to identify patterns of shared and significant meaning.

Media Studies-Early Hollywood Comediennes, supervised by Kristine Karnick, PhD. Responsibilities included documentation of film archives, research on copyright law effects on early films, and literature search.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Rhodes, N., Masterson, D., and Voight, S. (2012, November). Safe Driving Messages: *Affective and cognitive effects on driving intention*. Paper to be presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Orlando, Florida.

Voight, S. (2012, April). *If it weren't for my wife: A narrative analysis of dialectical tensions in the relationships of people living with type II diabetes*. Poster presented at the Kentucky Conference on Health Communication.

AFFILIATIONS

National Communication Association, 2010 to present

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Second Annual Critical Thinking Symposium, May 7-8, 2012

IUPUI Gateway to Graduation Program

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Training System Analyst, Environmental Health and Safety, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, March 2012 – present. Responsibilities include facilitation of classroom and online training via LMS; analysis of the safety training needs of each area within the university; management of a system for compliance tracking; and creation of training presentations for online use. Knowledge of Adobe Creative Suite, Absorb and Oncourse learning management systems, online collaboration systems, and social media.

Exam Room Supervisor and Proctor, Exam Center, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, August 2010 – September 2012. Responsibilities include execution of standardized examinations within compliance of agency policy for a number of different agencies such as ACT, and LSAC.

Education Coordinator Graduate Medical Education, Mayo Clinic Arizona, September 1998 – October 2006. Responsibilities included operations management of accredited residency and fellowship training programs within ACGME guidelines and Mayo Clinic College of Medicine policy.